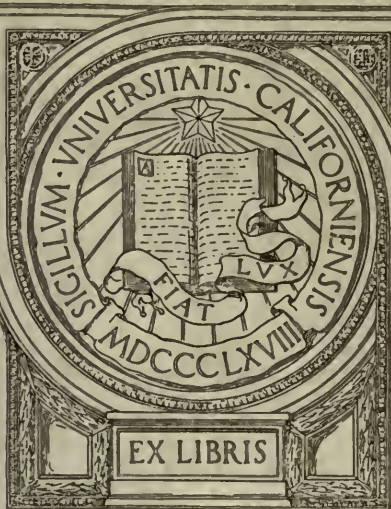




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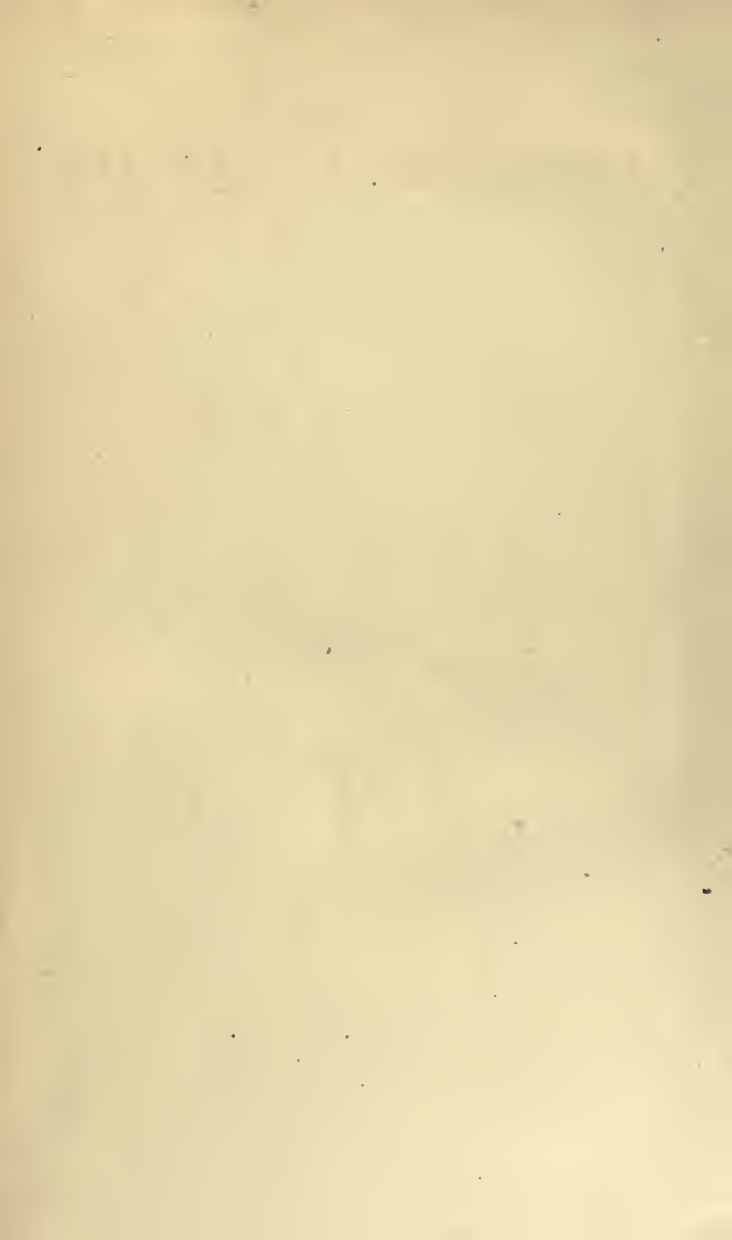
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BELIEFS OF THE UNBELIEVERS

AND

OTHER DISCOURSES

BY

OCTAVIUS BROOKS FROTHINGHAM



NEW YORK

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BELIEFS OF THE UNBELIEVERS.

IN a Swedenborgian book, written thirty years ago, on the Inspiration of the Bible, I find a description of a "horrid desart" occupying hundreds of square miles of the territory that lies between the Mississippi river and the Rocky Mountains. In this "frightful district," says the writer, "vegetation is mostly confined to tufts of withered grass, prickly pears, and those succulent and saline plants which can derive subsistence out of the most arid, sandy, and sterile soils. A species of cactus, known as the *Cactus ferox*, reigns sole monarch over myriads of acres of these desolate plains. Another species, called the *Cactus cylindricus*, grows singly and forms a cluster by itself, increasing to such a size that, seen from a distance, it is frequently mistaken for a bison. Clouds of locusts fill the air, uttering shrill and deafening cries; while the Mississippi hawk, wheel-

ing through their ranks, seems to enjoy his favorite prey. Rattlesnakes of various kinds, and scolopendras of enormous size, crawl over the naked surface; and immense black hairy spiders, like the bird-catching animal of South America, watch for prey at the mouth of their subterranean habitations."

This bit of description, which the author by the way, uses to illustrate the sympathy between fallen nature and fallen man, was taken, he says, from the report of a government expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, under the charge of Mr. James. I do not mean to call in question the correctness of the description, or to suggest that Mr. James saw with other eyes than those of his head, used exaggerated language in the account he gave of his travels in the then unexplored West, or consulted artistic effects in the selection and arrangement of his materials. It is sufficient for my purpose to state that recent surveys feebly justify Mr. James' description. The Pacific Railroad passes directly through this dismal region, and we do not hear that the passengers on the road are struck with terror by the desolation they witness. A Western gentleman of scientific acquirements, told me that, while journeying to California last summer, he stood at the end of the last car that composed the train, in order that he might the better see this awful desert,

but it was not there. On the contrary, what he saw was a singularly hopeful country for agriculture and dwellings—a country not smooth yet, or smiling, but full of the promise of gladness.

My own information on these matters is got at second hand. But deeming the “New American Cyclopedia” a good authority, I consulted it, and therein read that the vast plain east of the Rocky Mountains, including the great lakes and mighty rivers, is the most fertile region of the continent. A Mr. Frost, of Nebraska, stated some time ago, that he had been searching ten years for the “Great American Desert,” and had found a tract of country that would support the millions of a future population. If Mr. James reported correctly the superficial aspect of the country, he did not do justice to the geological character of the soil.

Similar accounts come to us of intellectual and moral deserts—great spaces of territory or of time, covered with the prickly thorns of disbelief, cursed with poisonous vegetable growths, infested by deadly serpents, made hideous by unclean animals, and awful by the dark flapping of demoniac wings. Such a district the Roman empire is supposed to have been previous to the coming of Christ. Most Christians, taking the report of prejudiced explorers who have skirted the region with guides sworn to tell what

their employers wished to hear, or who have arrived at their knowledge through the powerful lenses of an evangelical faith, think even now of that reach of history as an utterly Godless tract of time, a land of darkness as of darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness. The wise know better. The scholarship of our generation, using finer instruments and possessing a more perfect method, has reclaimed that once frightful domain of history. We know that human nature exhibited there all its attributes, its best as well as its worst; that it hoped, trusted, prayed, believed, endeavored, and attained; that it produced sages, reformers, and saints; grew philosophers by the dozen, noble men and women by the score; that it rectified laws, remedied abuses, restrained crime, rebuked vice, and in the usual way pushed itself out into the light and atmosphere of virtue.

Renan's great chapter in the "Apostles," on the condition of the world about the middle of the second century, makes it pretty clear that the period of time so long regarded as given over to the devil, was neither worse nor better than it ought to have been; that it lay directly in the track of historic progress, contained the fruits of the ages that preceded, and had in its bosom the seeds of the ages that were to follow.

Mr. Lecky, too, in his "European Morals," makes it appear that the Roman empire neither experienced conversion nor needed it; that it was prepared to receive the best that Christianity had to give; that in fact it was in condition to improve Christianity in some important details, and did, in some respects, modify it for the better, while itself modified by it for the worse. Thus, one by one, the deserts are reclaimed, and shapes of moral grandeur are revealed in spots where nothing was supposed able to exist.

It is my purpose, in this lecture, to make a short excursion into the dreaded shadow-land of so-called Infidelity, for the purpose of bringing thence fruits of belief and hope. Would that I might, partially at least, recover to solid respect those ghostly regions, give reassurance to timid travellers who venture near them, and persuade the doubting that beneath the bogs and the briars there is a layer of strong and fertile soil. The region I explore is indefinite in extent and outline; I have no intention of mapping it out scientifically. The fruits I bring thence, though not hastily snatched, are but specimens. You will not find fault with me for bringing you the best I could procure. With the worst side of "Infidelity" I suppose you all to be familiar. You must have read little and absented yourselves from church a good deal if you are not. Candor requires that the

better side should be shown. Though exaggeration on the one part might excuse exaggeration on the other, I will try not to exaggerate. Misrepresentation does not justify misrepresentation, nor does falsehood warrant falsehood. The only thing worth having is truth. I simply give you fair warning that I shall present the attractive side of the truth. You have had the shadow without the light. There is no injustice in giving you the light without the shadow.

In every age of Christendom there have been men whom the Church named "infidels," and thrust down into the abyss of moral reprobation. The oldest of these are forgotten with the generations that gave them birth. The only ones now actively anathematized lived within the last hundred years, and owe the blackness of their reputation to the assaults they made on superstitions that still are powerful, and dogmas that are still supreme. The names of Chubb, Toland, and Tindal, of Herbert of Cherbury, Shaftesbury, and Bolingbroke, though seldom spoken now, are mentioned, when they are mentioned, with bitterness. The names of Voltaire and Rousseau recall at once venomous verdicts that our own ears have heard. The memory of Thomas Paine is still a stench in modern nostrils, though he has been dead sixty years, so deep a stamp of damnation has been fixed on his

name. Even a man so well intentioned as Adam Storey Farrar, author of a "Critical History of Free Thought," a book sterile and cold, but admirable in the main for its candor, and written by a man who must have studied his themes for himself, falls into the vulgar tone of the pulpit when speaking of these men who dared to reject the prevailing beliefs of Christendom. It will be years before the grass will be allowed to grow green on their graves.

Skeptics they were—I claim for them that honor. It is their title to immortality. Doubtless they were, in many things, deniers, "infidels," if you will. They made short work of creed and catechism, of sacrament and priest, of tradition and formula. Miraculous revelations, inspired Bibles, authoritative dogmas, dying Gods and atoning Saviours, infallible apostles and churches founded by the Holy Ghost, ecclesiastical heavens and hells, with other fictions of the sort, their minds could not harbor. They criticized mercilessly the drama of Redemption, and spoke more roughly than prudently of the great mysteries of the Godhead. But, after their fashion, they were great believers. In the interest of faith they doubted, in the interest of faith they denied. Their "Nay" was an uncouth method of pronouncing "Yea." They were after the truth, and supposed themselves to be removing a rubbish pile to reach it. TOLAND, whose

“Christianity not Mysterious” was presented by the Grand Jury of Dublin and condemned to the flames by the Irish Parliament, while the author fled from government prosecution to England, professed himself sincerely attached to the pure religion of Jesus, and anxious to exhibit it free from the corruptions of aftertimes. THOMAS PAINE wrote his “Age of Reason” as a check to the progress of French atheism, fearing “lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true.”

One Edwards, in a savory book called “Gangræna,” done in 1646, enumerates one hundred and eighty “flagrant heresies” even then corroding the heart of England. Here are a few of them taken from his list: That the living Word is the Christ, not the Scripture; that we may walk with God as well as the patriarchs; that half the glory of God has not been revealed, we must wait for the Spirit’s disclosures to our hearts; that the spirit that moved the penmen of Scripture was their own; that right reason is the rule of faith; that there should be free toleration for all consciences, and no punishment for blasphemy, disbelief in the Bible, or denial of the existence of a God; that God is one, not three; that Christ was not by nature holier than we; that Christ came to

declare the love of God, not to *purchase* it; that men may be saved without Christ; that all men will at last be saved. There were some pestilent fellows at that time it seems, who declared it to be the sin of the kingdom "that the Jews were not allowed the open profession and exercise of their religion." These opinions are common-place now. Some of them have quietly ensconced themselves in "orthodox" churches and are welcomed as the latest disclosures of the Spirit.

These devout unbeliefs were born of the spirit of the age. It was an age—rather let me call it a series of ages—in which great events occurred. There had been a terrible shaking of thrones and altars. The axe had fallen on the neck of a king, and the halberd had smitten the images of many saints. Scarcely an authority stood fast. Not one was unchallenged. The brain of Bacon had discharged its force into the intellectual world. Newton's torch was flinging its beams to the confines of creation. The national genius sparkled in constellations of brilliant men; continental literature was pouring into England; the speculative mind of Holland, the dramatic writing and criticism of France. There was new thought and fresh purpose, a determination to know and do something, a sense of intellectual and moral power that portended great changes in Church and State.

The infidels were the men who felt this spirit first. They were its children; they gave it voice; it gave them strength. They trusted in it. Fidelity to its call was their faith. They believed in the sovereignty of reason, the rights of the individual conscience, and they cherished a generous confidence in the impulses of an emancipated and ennobled humanity. They had that faith in human nature which, indeed, is, and ever has been, the faith of faiths. It is a faith hard to hold. These infidels must have found it so in their time. When shall we honor, at its due, the heroism of protest, the valor of disbelief? When shall we give to the martyrdom of Denial its glorious crown?

If one thing be clear it is, that faith is large in proportion as it dares to put things to the proof. Fear and laziness can accept beliefs—only trust and courage will question them. To reject consecrated opinions demands a consecrated mind. At all events, the moving impulse to such rejection is faith; faith in reason; faith in the mind's ability to attain truth; faith in the power of thought, in the priceless worth of knowledge. The great skeptic must be a great believer. None have so magnificently affirmed as those who have audaciously denied; none so devoutly trusted as they who have sturdily protested. Not willingly do good men undermine deep-planted beliefs, or throw precious hopes away. Small pleasure

does it give to noble minds to pull down roofs beneath which for ages people have found shelter. If they are indifferent to others' sorrow, they must have some thought for themselves. Is there pleasure in braving ill-will, hate, persecution, in order that we may belittle the world and ourselves? Is it such a privilege to be without faith in the world, that men are willing to lay down their lives for it? Is it true, as I read lately on a sarcastic page, that "the most advanced thinker of our time takes an enlightened pride in his father, the monkey? That when he has sunk his pedigree as man, and adopted as family tree a procession of baboons, superior enlightenment radiates from his very person, and his place of honor is fixed in the illuminated brotherhood?" There are few who profess such a creed, but if there be any such, what martyrs so devoted as they, who are willing to abrogate humanity in the cause of knowledge, and to immolate their immortal being on the altar of Creative Law! The great provers have dared to prove because they were sure their proving must result in the establishment of truth. They heated up their crucibles and threw in their gems, because they expected to find at the bottom the stone that turned everything to gold. They asked questions, because they expected answers. They doubted, because they knew there was a solution. They said No to the assertions of

men because they said AY to some far-off affirmation of reason they had caught a whisper of. They put off from shore because they were confident that

If their bark sank 'twas to another sea.

They drew the veil from before the Holy of Holies because they wanted IT and not the curtain. No men have held such fundamental beliefs as the men who have promulgated the most audacious denials.

The beliefs of the unbelievers being fundamental are few. The creed of the infidel is, of necessity, short. The creed of the Mussulman is short—"There is no God but God, and Mahomet is His Prophet"—but it has one article to spare. Francis W. Newman's creed is short—"God is a righteous Governor, who loves the righteous and answers prayers for righteousness"—but this is capable of being abbreviated by omitting the last clause. Without attempting a summary statement, let me tell briefly what individual unbelievers have believed:—HERBERT OF CHURCH believed in a universal religion, implanted in the minds of all men, and evidenced to their intuitions of truth by its intrinsic character. The pillars of this faith were: the existence of One Supreme God; the duty of worship; the efficacy of repentance; a future life, with rewards and punishments. CHARLES BLOUNT held to the belief in a God who

was to be worshipped, not by sacrifice or mediation, but by piety, and whose nature forbade him to punish any hereafter. MATTHEW TINDAL asserted the immutability of God, and the perfection of his law as being the expression of eternal truth, and as binding on rational creatures throughout the universe; thus abolishing the distinction between natural and revealed religion, and making the first foremost. LORD SHAFTESBURY opposed the sensational philosophy of Locke, and maintained the existence of an immutable principle of faith and duty in the breast as the only secure foundation for moral and religious ideas. A high authority—no less an authority than SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH—declares that Shaftesbury's "Inquiry Concerning Virtue" contains more original and important views on the theory of morals than, perhaps, any preceding work of modern times. It was Shaftesbury who broached the doctrine of unselfish beneficence. It was he who defined goodness as disinterested love for the system of which we form a part. It was he who introduced the theory of a Moral Sense, which approves virtue for its own sake. The delight of virtue and the agony of vice were favorite topics of Shaftesbury's eloquence. This infidel taught that goodness was its own reward, and badness its own punishment; that LOVE was the keeping of the LAW. ANTHONY COLLINS, another

terrible name, charged with fatalism and materialism, received from the aged Locke a letter in which occurs this sentence: "Believe it, my good friend, to love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed plot of all other virtues; and, if I mistake not, you have as much of it as ever I met with in anybody." THOMAS CHUBB referred Christianity, along with other religions, to the law written on the heart, and defined virtue as simple conformity to the eternal rule of righteousness which God has immutably fixed. He expressed a hope that he might be "a sharer of the divine favor in that peaceful and happy state which God has prepared for the virtuous and faithful in some other future world."

BOLINGBROKE—the inspirer of "Pope's Essay on Man," that poem whose brilliancy of statement would alone give it fame—taught belief in the existence of a Supreme Being of infinite wisdom and power; the government of the world by general laws established in the beginning and never suspended; a rule of duty too clear to need light from revelation; the piety of gratitude and resignation; the preciousness of the pure religion of love taught by Jesus; and the needlessness of another life to reward goodness which was its own reward, or to punish evil which brought with it its own doom.

In England, infidelity planted itself on reason and common-sense, stood by the broad facts of the moral nature, maintained the unity of God, the perfect order of the world, and the final welfare of all creatures in it.

French infidelity had another cast. The English infidel was by privilege a philosopher. The French infidel was by necessity a revolutionist. Eminent Frenchmen of the last century went into ecstasies over the intellectual freedom of England. "How I love the boldness of the English!" exclaimed Voltaire; "How I love men who say what they think!" "The English," said Le Blanc, "are willing to have a king, provided they are not obliged to obey him." "Their system," said Montesquieu, "is a republic disguised as a monarchy." Mably added, "The Hanoverians are only able to reign in England because the people are free and believe they have a right to dispose of the crown." "In England," said Helvetius, "the people are respected. Every citizen can take some part in the management of affairs, and authors are allowed to enlighten the public respecting its interests." Grosley exclaimed, in amazement: "Property is in England a thing sacred even from the king himself."

Well might they be astonished, poor men! for nothing of all this could be said of their own country.

Buckle crowds ten pages of his first volume with instances of brutal persecution of literary men by the government. He questions whether one literary man in fifty escaped punishment for purely literary offences. Among the authors who suffered either confiscation, or imprisonment, or fine, or exile, or the suppression of their works, or the ignominy of being forced to recant what they had written, he finds the name of nearly every Frenchman whose writings have survived the age in which they were produced. On the bare suspicion of having composed a libel on the dead king, Louis XIV., Voltaire, without trial and without proof, was confined in the Bastille more than a year. For demanding satisfaction from a beastly noble who had outrageously insulted and assailed him, he was again imprisoned there six months. His history of Charles XII., was no sooner printed than its circulation was forbidden. His "Philosophic Letters" were on the most frivolous pretext ordered to be burned by the common hangman, and their author was once more arrested. He wished to communicate to his countrymen the discoveries of Newton, but the authorities forbade it. Rousseau was threatened with imprisonment, exiled, and his works were publicly burned. The treatise of Helvetius on the Mind was suppressed by order of the Royal Council, and burned by the common hang-

man; the author was compelled to retract his opinions. The first original work of Diderot, the "*Pensées Philosophiques*," was ordered to be publicly burned by the common hangman. For another work, his "*Letters on the Blind*," in which some sagacious hints were thrown out touching the effect of blindness on mental development, the unhappy author was arrested and confined in the Dungeons of Vincennes.

Before the first revolution, France had neither free press, free parliament, nor free debates. There were no public meetings, no popular discussions. There was no suffrage, no habeas corpus act, no trial by jury. A government decree forbade the publication of any work in which questions of government were discussed. Another made it a capital offence to write a book likely to excite the public mind. A third denounced the punishment of death against any one who spoke of matters of finance, or who attacked religion.

The whole intellect of France thus threatened, insulted, goaded to madness, rose in insurrection against the government; but the only hopeful way of assailing the government was to assail the Church. On the religious side the State was weak. Religion had no such hold on the popular mind as royalty had. Divinity hedged the king but not the priest. The

Church was subordinate to the Crown. The clergy had greatly degenerated in character and influence. Not only did they fail to command reverence by their virtues, they even forfeited respect by calling grossly immoral men to places of ecclesiastical dignity. They preached a morality they did not practice. "The French Church," said De Tocqueville, in his "Ancien Regime," though not more oppressive than the civil power, was more detested; for it interfered against its vocation and nature. It often sanctioned in its own members vices that it censured in those outside, cloaking them with its garment of inviolability, and apparently wishing to make them immortal like itself."

More than this. It was through the Church that the State irritated and rasped the intellect of the nation. The supervision of thought and the censorship of the press were in its hands. Thus in defense of their personal rights, as well as of intellectual liberty in general, the men of thought assailed religion. Feeble at once, and odious, implicated in the iniquities of the government, yet sharing neither the government's prestige nor power, hated for its despotic will, despised for its servile temper, an object of attack but not of veneration, vulnerable in creed and rite, in the acts of its great officials and in the private character of its subordinate clergy—the

Church of France offered the first point to the attack of outraged genius.

Circumstances rendered the attack headlong and furious. A change of circumstances brought reaction and revenge. The return of imperialism brought a return of ecclesiasticism. The Church regained its power and piled infamy on the names of its enemies. The disinfecting beams of knowledge are decomposing that mass of ordure. We see now that these men lived and died in the faith; that their courage was kindled at the upper, not the nether fires; that they spoke because they believed; that the love of truth and the love of humanity constrained them; that their foes were dogmatism and superstition—those demons of the pit that always succeed in blackening and defaming those who touch them. We see that their allies were knowledge, intelligence, faith, and hope. We have heard till we are sick of the *destruction* they brought on holy things. We are beginning to hear of the magnificent work of regeneration which they projected. The word given me to say is, that *these unbelievers believed; these infidels had souls of faith.*

No justice is done to the faith of these men by a bare enumeration of their religious opinions. It is interesting to know that Voltaire believed in a personal God, and argued in favor of immortality. The

inscription on his tomb, "He combatted the Atheists," wears an impressive look. But Voltaire was neither philosopher nor theologian, and spent no considerable portion of his brain force on abstract problems. His faith was in live mind, and this faith came out in his application of the scientific method to sacred history and of the laws of reason to sacred books, imperfect though that application may have been, imperfect as it necessarily was. His faith in divine justice and in human kindness appears in his steady protest against the use of torture, the death penalty, and the confiscation of property. It appears in his incessant desire for prison reform, for repeal of the laws against sacrilege, for absolute liberty of conscience. It comes out again in his strenuous opposition to slavery and serfdom, and the sacred barbarism of war. "We may count him," said Condorcet, "among the very few men whose love of humanity amounted to a passion." I read Voltaire's confessions of faith in such sentences as these:

"As the law of gravitation, so the fundamental moral law acts with equal force on all nations."

"The best government is that in which all conditions are equally protected by the laws."

"If we paint justice with bandaged eyes, we should put reason with her to guide her steps."

“The God who is worthiest our adoration is the Deity who can create rational beings.”

“The sentiment of justice is so natural, so universally acquired by all mankind, that it seems to me independent of all law, all party, all religion.”

“You priests who would emulate Jesus, be martyrs, and not butchers.”

“Nature says to all men : You are born weak and ignorant. Being weak, help yourselves ; being ignorant, get knowledge. I have given you arms to cultivate the soil, and a glimmer of reason to guide your steps. And I have put in your hearts a germ of sympathy, that you may help one another to support life. Stifle not that germ, neither corrupt it ; know that it is divine, and beware how for the voice of nature you substitute the miserable janglings of the school.”

“The human race prefers struggle to dependence, as horses prefer the wild plain to the stall.”

Sentences like these, scattered all over his pages, and written, most of them, in heart's blood, attest the fact that this terrible infidel had a soul of faith great enough to save him. It saved more beside, in his own time and since.

But what can we say for Diderot, the Atheist ? This at least, that in toiling as he did over the famous *Cylopædia*, that renowned manifesto of infidelity, he

sought to spread, deepen, and confirm the spirit of justice and humanity that was promising so much for the new age. His inspiration was the spirit of intelligence, not the spirit of disbelief. It was Diderot who replied to the friend who warned him of the dangers that beset his path, and urged him to flee: "O Solon, Solon! what would life be worth to me if I must preserve it at the price of all that makes it dear! Every morning I wake in hope to find that the wicked have all been converted during the night, and that the fanatics are no more." And it is of Diderot that the following touching story is told: Walking one day in the fields with a friend, the philosopher plucked an ear of corn, and fell a-musing over it. "What are you doing?" asked the friend. "Listening," was the reply. "Who is speaking to you?" "God." "Well, what does he say?" "He speaks in Hebrew. The heart comprehends; but the understanding is at fault."

This man's atheism, then, was the protest of a glowing heart against a freezing divinity; the cry for a large God, instead of a small one; the longing for a God who could feel. "Madmen!" he shouted to the ecclesiastics; "tear down the walls that imprison your ideas! Extend your Godhead! Confess that He is everywhere, or deny that He is at all."

But surely no good thing can be urged for materi-

alists like Helvetius, or Baron d'Holbackh. Vainly will you attempt to show us *their* faith, or count up *their* beliefs. To be sure the articles are few. But that is the best reason for doing justice to them, such as they are. These men rose in such wrath against the Church, and struck at it so fiercely, that they smote away the last vestige of religious opinion, leaving neither conscious God nor personal immortality ; neither intelligent soul nor spiritual substance. Man was, in their view, an ingenious piece of mechanism, worked by the spring of selfishness. They were something of Napoleon's mind, that the heart had its seat in the pit of the stomach, and hunger ruled the world. Fear of pain, love of pleasure, there you have their secret of human nature. Their universe was a machine. Well, but it was a *live* machine and *perfect*, ruled and directed by natural laws, the observance of which is happiness. Let priests and kings keep off their hands. Abolish fanaticism ; put away superstition ; let men follow their instincts ; give place to common sense ; find the natural laws, understand them, obey them, and the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," will be answered. Mr. Beecher, announcing a lecture by Dr. Furness, remarked that some men will do more with a jack-knife than others will with a complete chest of tools. I have a friend who says, "*There is one God ; and*

Helvetius is His prophet, and I know no more hopeful enthusiast than he. He affirms like a preacher, proselytes like an apostle, and hopes like a saint. His “natural laws” wear all the attributes of Deity; and the promise of fidelity to the organized divinity outshines that of the Messianic Millennium.

Sensible men have done talking of the infidelity of Rousseau, the apostle of sentiment in religion, the prophet of the conscience, the champion of the intuitions, the passionate eulogist of Jesus, the serious enthusiast, with the fire-mist of faith in his heart, and words of kindling eloquence on his lips. The sentimentalists are getting their glory now by repeating this infidel's thoughts on the absolute goodness of God and the large hospitality of heaven. Our republican state is not more indebted to him for its idea of man, than is our liberal church for its idea of Deity.

Let us come now to Tom Paine—(his name was Thomas, but that name, being Christian, is not given him yet by respectable people)—Tom Paine, then—“The man of three countries, and disowned by all”—“English in his deism, American in his radicalism, French in his temper of scoffing;” the bugbear of the priest; the Anti-Christ of the preacher. How many of his accusers have ever read his writings? How many who calumniate his character have taken pains to search his opinions? How many who denounce

his opinions have thought it worth their while to examine his life? The "Age of Reason" opens with this comprehensive statement :

" I believe in one God and no more ; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

" I believe the equality of man ; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy."

Further on we read : " The word of God is the creation we behold. It is an existing original which every man can read. It cannot be forged ; it cannot be counterfeited ; it cannot be lost ; it cannot be altered, it cannot be suppressed. It publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds ; and this word reveals to man all it is necessary for him to know of God."

And again : " The true Deist has but one deity ; and his religion consists in contemplating his power, wisdom, and benignity, and in endeavoring to imitate him in everything moral, scientific, and mechanical."

And once more : " I trouble myself not about the manner of future existence. I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the power that gave me existence is able to continue it in any form and manner he pleases, either with or without this body ; and it appears more probable to me that

I shall continue to exist hereafter, than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began."

"*The world, my country; to do good, my religion,*" was this unbeliever's motto. In 1797, Mr. Paine was the chief promoter of the society of "theophilanthropists," whose object was the extinction of religious prejudices, the maintenance of morality, and the diffusion of faith in the one God.

"It is want of feeling," says this heartless blasphemer, "to talk of priests and bells, while infants are perishing in hospitals, and aged and infirm poor are dying in the streets."

In his last will and testament the old man declares:

"I have lived an honest and useful life to mankind; my time has been spent in doing good; and I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my creator, God."

To Paine we owe this exquisite definition: "Religion is man bringing to his Maker the fruits of his heart." It occurs in "The Rights of Man." The author fancies the members of the great family bringing their gifts; a poem, an essay, a piece of art, an invention of genius, a darling possession. They come, some richly laden with treasures, and some with a pretty flower, perhaps with nothing better than a weed; but all are equally welcome, the Great Fath-

er being pleased with the variety of the offerings, and caring more for the sincerity than for the gift.

This man may have been an unbeliever, but surely he was something more. In these days we should rank him in the same general class with our beloved and honored Theodore Parker. He was one of the precursors of that greatest of unbelievers whose majestic faith in the Soul shook the churches and made dogmatism faint.

In speaking of the faith of the infidels, I do not shrink from using that word in its high moral sense. Character is the test of conviction. Unbelievers, as well as believers, must be judged by their conduct as men. Saints are rare in any church. "He prayeth best who loveth best." In the same spirit it may be said, he believeth best who liveth best. I do not shrink from submitting the infidels to this austere standard. They were not saints, but men like the rest of us, partaking the infirmities of our common humanity, sharing the faults, sometimes the vices of their time. Exposed as they were, one and all, to extraordinary exasperations, crosses, and trials, it would not have been surprising if they had betrayed more than the ordinary amount of human infirmity. The *rôle* of innovator in religion is trying enough to the temper. And when the innovator in religion is an innovator in politics and ethics, the temptation to be

unfaithful to goodness is very strong. Yet, in point of character, these men will bear comparison with the so-called "believers" of their age. All of them had a certain nobility of soul. Some of them were heroes.

Lord Barrington speaks of the "virtuous and serious deists" of his time. Taylor calls Herbert of Cherbury "a man of religious mind." Sir James Mackintosh describes Shaftesbury as "a man of many excellent qualities; temperate, chaste, honest, and a lover of his country. In public affairs he co-operated earnestly with the friends of freedom; but he had the courage to oppose them when they would deprive those accused of treason (the Jacobins, namely) of the privilege of defence by counsel. Like John Adams, he was determined that even the enemies of liberty should be protected by law.

Bolingbroke was a victim to the natural reaction of a keen temperament against a severe puritanical training. His libertinism was not so much the result of his infidelity as of his mother's injudicious nurture. The youth rebelled before the man doubted.

Collins is admitted to have been a man of great private and social worth. He must indeed have had noble qualities to secure the esteem of one so clear-sighted and upright as Locke.

Of Helvetius, the French materialist, Louis Blanc

bids us remember "that he had a generous soul, and virtues which refuted his doctrine." A rich man, living on his estates, he labored to improve the condition of the peasantry, a virtue, the rarity of which even among believers, should distinguish its possessor in better times than those in which Helvetius lived.

There are few to speak a word in praise of Diderot, whom unhappily, it is but too easy to cover with reproaches. There were things in his life that did no credit to him or to humanity. Judge them and condemn them as they deserve. I enter here no apology or extenuation. But Denis Diderot had a heart that could be touched by mortal infirmities. It is recorded of him that, returning one evening to his hotel, tired, discouraged, and half-famished, and receiving from his compassionate landlady a bit of bread dipped in wine, he vowed that if ever he had anything to give, he would refuse no one in want, nor would ever condemn a fellow-creature to a single day of such misery as he had endured for weeks. "And never," adds his daughter, "was oath more frequently or more piously kept." His study was a sort of consulting office, where every one was welcome to good advice or more substantial aid. To the priest who urged upon him that, by slightly modifying his religious opinions, his other writings would have more

influence on society, and bring him remuneration, this Atheist replied: "That is quite possible; but Monsieur Abbé, you must admit that it would be at the cost of an impudent falsehood." For a few such atheists as that the Christian world would be none the worse.

Clergyman are not in the habit of dwelling on the great qualities of Voltaire. They have counted his little ones, multiplied them by ten, and then perfumed them with assafoetida. The great ones were not for their turn. But truth will have its day, and that day will come soon. Fair-minded historians, like Schlosser, Campbell, Brougham, Lerminier, Buckle, have been removing the odium which Christian rancor and pious mendacity industriously, for half a century, heaped on the brave reformer's grave: and when his true life shall be written his fine traits of generosity courage, justice, kindness, devotion to humanity will shine like stars in the firmament.

"The principal traits in the character of Voltaire," says Jules Barni, "were benevolence, tenderness to the weak, hatred of wrong and oppression." And Gaberel, no impartial judge, is obliged to confess that he made a noble use of his fortune, and his benefactions with words and manners of the most exquisite delicacy.

Voltaire's grand acts of heroism are known to all

who have read anything about him. On his cenotaph, in the vaults of the Pantheon, is this inscription, significantly hidden by a screen: "Il defendit Calas, Sirven, De la Barre, et Mountbailly." Those names recall noble services to mankind. JEAN CALAS was an old man, a Protestant, whose son, Marc Antoine, a morbid, passionate, vehement youth, inclined to Romanism, committed suicide in a fit of depression. The Protestant father was charged with the murder, tortured, condemned, and executed. The family were exiled or incarcerated. Voltaire, hearing of the hideous wrong, sprang forward to redress it. For three years he toiled ceaselessly—writing, pleading, interceding with the powerful, stimulating the zeal of advocates, exciting the pity of generous hearts, and in all that time he reproached himself for every smile as if it were a guilt. He procured a reversal of judgment. On his return to Paris, relates Condorcet, when one day the crowd was surrounding him on the Pont Royal, a stranger asked a woman of the laboring class, who the man was that drew such a multitude after him: "Do you not know," she replied, "the saviour of Calas?" The incident reached the ears of Voltaire, and touched him more than any other token of the applause that was lavished on him. SIRVEN was also a Protestant, whose daughter, abducted by priests for the purpose of making her a nun, escap-

ed from them, and drowned herself to avoid falling again into their hands. The priests tried to shield themselves by laying her death at her father's door. The father barely saved himself by fleeing with all his family into Switzerland. He appealed to Voltaire, and he did not appeal in vain. The warm heart took fire again, and flamed for nine years—not till the end of which was Sirven triumphantly acquitted. The Chevalier DE LA BARRE was a young gentleman who was tortured and put to a horrible death, on the charge of having mutilated a wooden crucifix that stood on one of the bridges. To his rescue Voltaire rushed forward. Failing to save the young man, he toiled for twelve years to get his family reinstated in their possessions—toiled, too, against the hope of success. His denunciations of the crime rung through Europe.

MONTBAILLY was a poor gardener, who was broken on the wheel and burned alive, on a false accusation of parricide. Voltaire obtained a revision of the trial, preserved his wife—whose condition alone saved her from being executed with her husband—and restored the unhappy man's civil name. Does it require a very long mantle of charity to cover the reputation of a man who did such deeds as these?

But the straws show the set of the wind. The loan of seven thousand five hundred and eighty

frances to a laborer who was about to be imprisoned for debt, and his reply when told that the man would never be able to pay it back: "So much the better; one loses nothing who returns a father to his family, a citizen to the state;" his kindness to the widow, whose creditors he bought off; his goodness to the villager, whose debt he forgave and whose lost cattle he replaced; his present of a thousand crowns to a farmer ruined by an iniquitous law-suit; his payment of fifteen thousand francs to save the estate of a poor and worthy family from the greedy Jesuits, who thought they could buy it for a quarter part of its value,—such things as these show the under-current of nobility in this man.

Voltaire must have had a great soul, or he could not have fought a great fight. Vanity, meanness, frivolity, spitefulness, never clothe men in such armor as he wore; never meditate such wars as he undertook; never secure such conquests as he gained. His course finished, he could say, "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith." It is sweet to know that the strong soldier kept his tender heart to the end. In his last hour Voltaire did not forget the dear cause of humanity. In one of his intervals of intelligence, hearing it said that the sentence of of infamy pronounced on the name of the Chevalier De la Barre had been reversed, he seized a pen and

wrote to the son of the unfortunate man whom, twelve years before, he had done his best to save: "I die content. I see that the king loves justice." These were the last words Voltaire wrote.

The new day-spring that is coming over the hills has reached even the low grave of Thomas Paine, and is covering it with flowers. The foul spectres that gathered there no longer appear to those that have eyes to see. Every true American should know at least something of the great qualities of Thomas Paine. Every true American should know that it was he that struck the key-note of our Revolution by his "Common Sense." Every true American should know that his "Crisis," written in an hour of extreme discouragement, electrified the army, put a soul into the country, and was worth to the failing cause of Independence more than an army with banners. Its first sentence, "These are the times that try men's souls," is still the patriot's battle-cry in the last struggle. Every true American should know and should love to remember, that when these two publications were having an enormous sale—the demand for the former reaching not less than one hundred thousand copies, and both together offering to the author profits that would have made him rich—the author, a man poor and overworked, refused a cent of remuneration for his

toil, and, like a prince,—nay, rather like a true friend of man,—freely gave the copy-right to every State in the Union. Every true American should know and delight to tell how Thomas Paine, in his period of public favor and of intimate friendship with the founders of the government, declined to accept any place or office of emolument, saying, “I must be in every thing as I have ever been, a disinterested volunteer ; my proper sphere of action is on the common floor of citizenship, and to honest men I give my hand and my heart freely.” Every true American should know, and should not forget, that when the State of Virginia made a large claim on the General Government for lands, Thomas Paine opposed the claim as unreasonable and unjust, though at that very time there was a resolution before the Legislature of Virginia to appropriate to him a handsome sum of money for services rendered. Not for any private considerations would he hold back his protest. Every true American will be glad to know that Paine, though an Englishman, had such love for republican institutions that he declared he would rather see his horse, Button, eating the grass of Bordentown or Morrisania, than see all the pomp and show of Europe.

No private character has been more foully calumniated in the name of God than that of Thomas

Paine. What mud-heaps pious Christian hands have piled on the grave of the "liar," the "sot," the "adulterer," the "common swearer," the "low ribald," the "cowardly assailant of a faith to whose disciples he was indebted for charity in his last hours." Few persons now take interest in the charges or their refutation. Paine has been dead more than sixty years; too long for men to care whether he was slandered or not. Some who hear me will think that I am wasting these few words on an obsolete issue. But history deems no words wasted in efforts to rescue from oblivion or from infamy the smallest human name. And were I writing as a historian, I should feel justified in demanding attention to a fully detailed vindication of this name so remarkable in our own annals.

I am not writing as a historian but as a Free Religionist. My object is to show that infidels have their virtues as well as their beliefs; that the territory occupied by the unbelievers is not a barren desert, but a fruitful domain, where the humanities dwell and the angels sing. In a question like this, all are interested, whether they care for the truth of biography or not.

And for my purpose it is enough that the charges against Thomas Paine's character have in every instance rebounded against his accusers. Grant Thor-

burn borrowed, and for base ends reprinted, private letters from William Carver, angry letters, more than insinuating that Paine was a drunkard and a dirty fellow. Carver himself denounced the proceeding, regretted the intemperate language he had used, disavowed the imputations, and asked the abused Paine's forgiveness.

James Cheetham, who, in addition to other slanders, accused Paine of improper intimacy with the wife of a friend and benefactor; was prosecuted and convicted by a jury in Philadelphia, where Paine was extremely unpopular, for having published a false and malicious libel.

Mary Hinsdale, the silly servant girl, who had gossipped stupidly to the effect that Paine, in his last illness, was in a pitiable condition for want of the bare necessities of life; that the neighbors, out of charity, supplied him with sustenance; that he recanted his opinions and became converted to Christianity, and much more of the like—Mary Hinsdale, whose unreliable word alone supports the burden of calumny in which bigots most delight, had nothing to say when cross-questioned, but shuffled, evaded, equivocated, didn't understand, didn't remember and finally declared she had no recollection of any person or thing she saw in Thomas Paine's house.

The truth is, that Paine, though not rich, was in

comfortable circumstances. He had considerable property, which is specified in his will. His sick bed was surrounded by friends who ministered to his wants, witnessed the firmness and calmness of his last hours, and attested the sincerity and sufficiency of his convictions. Not even the impertinent intrusiveness of the clergy disturbed the entire serenity of his death.

It is certain that Paine was not a fine gentleman. It is certain that he was not a man of delicate spiritual refinement. It is certain that he was no saint; but it is equally certain that he was not a sinner above all the rest who dwelt in Jerusalem. He drank occasionally more brandy than was wise, more than would now be deemed dignified; but reputable Christians of his time kept him countenance in this. He was no dandy; he went to dinner in a dressing gown; but when was foppery reckoned an apostolic grace? He used snuff; but is snuff-taking so much more heinous than smoking, which is said to be a clerical weakness, that it makes all the difference between the believer and the infidel? He lost his temper sometimes; and what amount of orthodoxy will make it sure that a good man in certain cases will not? Stones like these must not be flying about promiscuously. Had Paine been less of a hero he would have enjoyed a better reputation with the leaders of fash-

ion. Had he been more of an apostate, his name might have been a sweet savor in the nostrils of piety. Had he loved liberty less intensely, he would not have been rejected by the politicians. Had he been a colder friend of humanity, he would not have been anathematized by the priests. It was very magnificent when, in the French Assembly, met to order the execution of Louis XVI., Thomas Paine rose and protested in the name of liberty against the deed. "Destroy the king," he cried, "but save the man. Strike the crown, but spare the heart!" The members in a rage would not believe their ears. "These are not the words of Thomas Paine," resounded from every side of the chamber. "They are my words," said the undaunted man. It was very magnificent, but it cost the hero his reputation, and came near costing him his life. He was twice sentenced. His death warrant was signed, and, but for what in the case of a Christian believer would have been considered a special Providence, he would have gone to the scaffold.

Character and credence follow different laws, and it is never safe to make one answerable for the other. But if we are going to hold opinions responsible for conduct, I would take my chance with the infidels quite as soon as with the believers. The faults of the infidel may be heat, rashness, audacity, a passion-

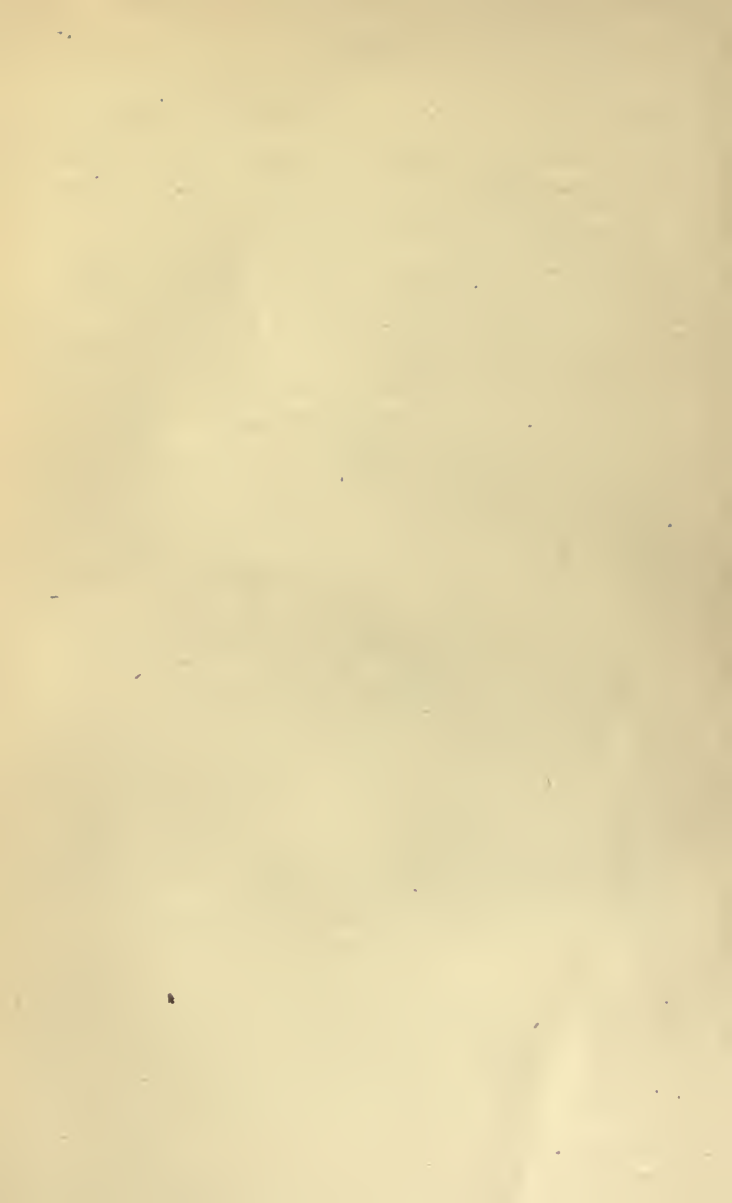
ate temper, a biting tongue. They are not cunning, calculation, cant, or cruelty.

Ah! what do we not owe to the few who have had the courage to disbelieve! What have not such men given to us! And how tenderly we should hold them in mind! The men who bore hard names through life, and after death had harder names piled like stones over their memories! The men who wore themselves down with thought! The men who lived solitary and misunderstood, who were driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, who were called infidels because they believed more than their neighbors, and heretics because they chose the painful pursuit of truth in preference to the idle luxury of traditional opinion, and Atheists because they rested on a God so large that the vulgar could not see his outline, and image breakers because they adored the unseen Spirit, and deniers of the Christ because they affirmed the Eternal World!

What do we not owe them, who went about shaking their heads and murmuring NO with their lips, their hearts all the while saying YES to the immortals! They, after all, are the builders of our most splendid beliefs. Almost all our rational faiths we must thank them for, liberators that they were! It is they who have quenched the revengeful fires of hell, and burned up the selfish chaff of heaven. It

is they who have taken the discord out of the heart of God, and made his countenance shine upon his creatures. It is they who have hunted the old devil from the highways and byways of creation. To them we owe deliverance from witchcraft, priestcraft, and the manifold shapes of superstition. They have taught us to read the Jewish bible with open eyes, and other bibles besides. They have interpreted the sweet humanity of Jesus. Who but they have practically taught us the preciousness of the rational life, have rescued us from the tyranny of establishments and creeds, and purchased with their blood the soul freedom which is our native birth-right?

We will cry with Erasmus, "Holy Socrates, pray for us." We will say with Schleiermacher, "Join me in offering a lock of hair to the shades of the rejected saint Spinoza. Full of religion, was he, and full of the Holy Ghost." And if there were a louder voice calling on us to lay tears, vows, and purposes on the graves of all faithful infidels and believing unbelievers, we should say, amen—and amen!



THE THEIST'S FAITH.

Oct-24th / 875-

IN a recent sermon on "The Living God" I spoke of atheism as being in its deep sense, absence of faith in a living intelligence will or sanctity that transcended the human. This is not speculative atheism. That is the failure of thought to find an infinite intelligence or will in the world of ideas. Speculative atheism need not trouble us much; for few persons entertain it with any consistency, and of those who do, many, if not most, are of such force of intellect and character that their lives obey laws deeper than their intellects are able to grasp. It is the greatness of their mental constitution that dwarfs the scope of their speculation. The best of these men live strongly on practical planes; their thoughts follow the lines of intellect law; their energies take hold of vital interests to such a degree that their *views* make little or no impression on the sweep of their spirits.

There is another atheism: the atheism of feeling, the atheism of the troubled or tormented heart, the atheism born of sorrow at the misery, or indignation at the wrong of society, that is more pathetic and more crushing. It is doubtful if atheism of thought is on the increase; but atheism of feeling probably is. For with every year knowledge of society, continually extending, makes us better acquainted with human guilt and sadness; and with every year human sensibility to suffering and evil becomes more acute. A gloomy presentiment seizes the mind that God is *not* in His heaven, that all is *not* right with the world; and this misgiving eats into the substance of hope and corrodes the springs of will. To *feel* that there is no God is more deplorable than to *think* there is none; for one who thinks there is none may, when he is not busy with thinking, but is absorbed in action, live healthily in his affections and determinations. But one who *feels* there is none carries his skepticisms about like a poison in the veins which unmans him for strenuous effort.

A great writer, not long ago deceased, a clear and unremitting thinker, but an earnest and powerful person too, has put these misgivings of the moral nature in a form that makes us shudder as at a grim demonstration. Stated in a word, his argument is that God must be either wanting in power or in

goodness—and wanting either, he fails to be God. “How,” he asks, “stands the fact? That next to the greatness of the cosmic forces, the quality which most forcibly strikes every one who does not avert his eyes from it, is their perfect and absolute recklessness. They go straight to their end, without regarding what or whom they crush on the road.” “In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are imprisoned or hanged for doing to one another, are Nature’s every-day performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognized by human laws, Nature does once to every being that lives; and in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow creatures. Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones, like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or a Domitian never surpassed. All this Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst.” After this

fearful arraignment of Nature, made in much detail and with deadly severity of logic, the writer asks: Why should all this be permitted? Is God willing to prevent it, but unable? Then he is not God, for he is less than omnipotent. Is he able, but unwilling? Then he is not God, for he is less than all beneficent. Choose your alternative. Almighty demon, or impuissant angel, which will you have? Select whichever you will; but whichever being you select he will not correspond to any sufficient conception of deity. The being you call God is either weak or wicked; in neither case is he adorable. Before a challenge like this the heart trembles. The alleged facts cannot be disputed. The earth is hideous with all this misery: the human race is afflicted with all these woes. Must the soul then cease to worship, must the heart cease to trust and love?

Without attempting a labored argument which, were I competent to make it against a reasoner like Stuart Mill, would occupy many discourses, let me try to indicate the theist's answer to the charge.

I. The word "omnipotence" needs examination, that the thought it stands for may be well defined. Mr. Mill, speaking in another work of the word "Infinite," says: "The conception of Infinite as that which is greater than any given quantity, is a conception we all possess, sufficient for all human pur-

poses, and as genuine and good a positive conception as one need wish to have. It is not adequate; our conception of a reality never is. But it is positive; and the assertion that there is nothing positive in the idea of infinity can only be maintained by leaving out and ignoring the very element which constitutes the idea." "Put Absolute instead of Infinite, and we come to the same result. If I talk of a being who is absolute in wisdom and goodness, that is, who knows everything, and at all times intends what is best for every sentient creature, I understand perfectly what I mean; and however much the fact may transcend my conception, the shortcoming can only consist in my being ignorant of the details of which the reality is composed." Now why not apply the same reasoning to the conception of Omnipotence? An omnipotent being is one who can do everything; but what *doing everything* may imply, will depend on our idea of what "everything" may be. Now of what "everything" may be, we have but the most inadequate conception. Can an omnipotent being make a circle to be at the same time a circle and a square? Can he make a cube to be at the same time a cube and a plane? Can he make a black object to be at the same time black and white? A line to be at the same instant straight and crooked? A fact to be at the same moment a fact

and a fiction? An omnipotent being is powerful within the laws of his own intelligence. The absolute despot keeps somewhere within the bounds of reason; he does not do literally *everything he likes*. Where there is intelligence, there are lines of determination, and power must respect these lines. An intelligent being must have aims and ends of his own, and his power must be exerted to reach these aims, and fulfil these ends. He cannot do things inconsistent with his own resolutions. He cannot swerve from his own prescribed path. He cannot falter in his own purposes. Whatever he may seek, whether it be his own glory, as the Calvinist supposes, or the perfection of humanity, as the Theist believes, or the final happiness of all creatures as the Universalist hopes, his omnipotence will work towards that result. He cannot waver or turn aside from it. He is fated by his own nature; predestinated, as it were, by the qualities which make him what he is. There have been people who believed that God predestinated the larger part of mankind to everlasting misery. They held that he was constrained to do it by the necessity imposed by his own eternal decrees. They were good men who believed this; tender hearted, devout, adoring men, who ascribed all manner of perfection to God; it never occurred to them to call in question the

Divine Omnipotence to do whatever It would. They were persuaded that Omnipotence itself was powerless to do what he would not. In other words, will being subservient to intelligence and character is their vassal, not their lord.

II. Then there can be no harm in repeating the old truism that the thoughts of a being much less than absolute, cannot be as our thoughts ; nor can his ways be as our ways. The sense of private justice and injustice, of actual right and wrong, even in the most enlightened minds and the noblest breasts cannot measure the sense of justice and injustice, cannot criticise the actual verdict of an archangel, or of any being of a superior order. The value of a judgment depends on completeness of information ; and in the case supposed, the information is desperately incomplete. The child's foolish complaint of the unkindness of its parent whose kindness is of a quality the child has not the faintest conception of ; the pupil's petulant murmurings at the teacher, whose mind entertains a comprehensive scheme of study, looking to the future dignity of his disciple, present no parallel to the preposterous waywardness of a human creature who finds fault with the arrangements of a being whose attributes in the nature of things, must be utterly beyond the reach of his apprehension.

Language is not strong enough to express the absurdity of such attempts at judgment, *supposing a God to exist*. "As the heavens are high above the earth, so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways."

Of course the human and the divine sense of justice must run parallel as far as they go together. To grant that there is anything in the world, in the whole world, in the whole conceivable world, that would seem unjust to one who knew all the circumstances,—to grant that there is anything that to a perfectly pure heart would seem wholly and absolutely wrong, would be fatal to any plea in favor of a righteous deity. But can any such thing be shown? Is there any uncaused, unrecompensed, unbalanced, unproductive evil? Is there any instance of divine guilt?

Miss Cobbe, in an argument for the necessity of another life to mend the defects of this, mentions the fate of Jesus as being one of those incidents, that are irreconcilable with the idea of a righteous governance of the world, and require another life for justification. But the fate of Jesus was clearly brought on by his own deliberate course of action; it was what he might and probably did anticipate; it was recompensed during his short lifetime, by satisfactions and joys that were dearer to him than

ought beside in the world; and it earned for him a crown of honor from his fellow-men such as never fell before or since to the lot of a human being. So far is this example from reflecting discredit on the divine righteousness, that it would be hard to find one that more completely illustrated the operation of retributive and recompensing law.

Miss Cobbe further instances the cruel retributions visited on women for offences against purity which man shares with her, the greater guilt of which, perhaps, belongs to man, yet which he perpetrates with comparative impunity, while she suffers all that a human being can. To the untrained eye this does look like a perverse departure from the plain rule of equity; a departure unjustified and, as far as appears, unjustifiable by any considerations that lie on the surface of thought. But when regard is had to the relative gravity of consequences in the two cases, to the sum of interests that society has at stake, to the necessity of guarding the helplessness and preserving the continuity of human life, enough is evident to vindicate from essential injustice the order of human progress.

The theist argues that evil is incidental; that in particular cases it is even tributary to general good; that individual suffering is made necessary for the welfare of the whole. To this Mill returns a scorn-

ful reply. "Optimists," he says, "in their attempts to prove that whatever is, is right, are obliged to maintain, not that Nature ever turns aside from her path to avoid trampling us into destruction, but that it would be very unreasonable in us to expect that it should." Pope's "Shall gravitation cease when you go by?" may be a just rebuke to any one who should be so silly as to expect common morality from Nature. But if the question were between two men, instead of between a man and a natural phenomenon, that triumphant apostrophe would be thought a rare piece of impudence. A man who should persist in hurling stones or firing cannon when another man "goes by," and having killed him, should urge a similar plea in exculpation, would, very deservedly, be found guilty of murder. Most assuredly, because it could not by any argument or representation be made to appear that any good end was served or contemplated by the action. It could not be imputed to aught but insanity or a spirit of reckless mischief. No beneficence matches that of the law of gravitation, which we know to be an important feature in the orderly administration of the universe. For a man to imitate the proceedings of Nature without thought of their intention, or knowledge of their drift, or respect for their possible intention, would be simply madness. Only a Deity can copy

a Deity. Does the wasteful, ruinous, self-destroying, and brutalizing drunkard imitate the example of the self-controlled, prudent, self-respecting man, who, for ends of health, cheerfulness, intellectual vigor, sips daily his glass of light wine? They both do the same thing, that is, both lift a cup to their lips; but the intention, the purpose, the character of the action, how different!

To copy an example without considering how far it ought or ought not to be copied, is foolish and wrong. Very true: "The order of Nature, *in so far as unmodified by man*, is such as no being, whose attributes are justice and benevolence, would have made with the intention that his rational creatures should follow it as an example." But if he never designed that his rational creatures should follow it as an example; if on the contrary he made his rational creatures to be a part of his universe, and so endowed them that they might conspire and co-operate with him to make the creation complete in excellence; nay, more, if he intended his rational creatures to be in a manner his own representative agents, his own incarnations, so to speak, in order that through them, his attributes of wisdom and goodness might be exhibited and acted out, then the burden of his opprobrium may be lightened. These are obvious thoughts, but are they not just ones?

They do not clear up the intricacies of speculation, but do they not remove obstacles from the main lines? They are worthless, perhaps, as proof that God exists, but presuming that he does exist, do they not relieve the presumption of heavy incumbrances?

III. The world of nature and of providence is not wholly or prevailingly dark. There is horror but there is more of glory. There is suffering, but there is more of satisfaction. There is sorrow, but there is more of joy. By looking at the evil side of things one easily persuades himself that there is nothing but evil. By looking at the good side of things one as easily persuades himself that there is nothing but good. By looking calmly at things one may persuade himself that good and evil are mixed, but that good has the upper hand of evil. The healthiest nature is the fairest judge; and the healthiest nature finds more health than sickness in the world. The deepest intelligence discovers the most intelligence; the sweetest soul discerns the most sanctity. There is an immense difference between the reports of the single and of the evil eye. The German philosopher who has earned his fame by the power with which he brought into relief the ugly aspects of what he chose to call the "worst possible world," was a morbid and uncomfortable man, disordered in system, a prey to imaginary fears, as little of a hero as one is likely

to find. The slave Epictetus, a pagan, living in the midst of the horrors and turpitudes of imperial Rome, breaks out thus : “ I would be found at my last day pondering how I might be able to say to God :— ‘ Have I transgressed Thy commands? Have I perverted the powers, senses, instincts, which Thou hast given me? Have I ever accused Thee or censured Thy dispensations? I have, like others, been sick, and patiently, for it was Thy pleasure; I have been poor, and contentedly, for it was Thy will. Thou didst decree that I should occupy a humble station, and power I have not desired. Hast Thou ever seen me sad for these causes? Have I not always approached Thee with a cheerful countenance, prepared to execute Thy commands and accept the intimations of Thy will? Must I now leave the world? I go. That Thou hast thought me worthy of a place in it I thank Thee; that Thou hast allowed me to behold Thy works and join Thee in contemplating Thy administrator.’ While I am thinking, writing, reading such things as these, let death overtake me.”

Opening the other day the biography of Henry Thoreau I came upon this passage in a letter : “ Again and again I congratulate myself on my so called poverty. When I can sit in a cold chamber, muffled in a cloak, warmed by my own thoughts,

the world is not so much with me. When I have only a rustling oak leaf, or the faint metallic cheep of a tree sparrow for variety in my winter's walk, my life becomes continent and sweet as the kernel of a nut." And again: "It is a significant fact that though no man is quite well or healthy, yet every one believes, practically, that health is the rule, and disease the exception, and each invalid is wont to think himself in a minority, and to postpone somewhat of endeavor to another state of existence." One of the saddest of modern English poets thus closes a poem entitled Consolation.

[The hour, whose happy
Unalloyed moments
I would eternalize,
Ten thousand mourners
Well pleased see end.

The bleak stern hour
Whose severe moments
I would annihilate,
Is passed by others
In warmth, light, joy.

* Time so complained of
Who to no one man
Shows partiality,
Brings round to all men
Some undimmed hours.

Whether, on the whole, existence is happier or more unhappy, the outward world darker or brighter, the

inward world more or less sorrowful, can never be determined. The universal dread of death, or unwillingness to leave the world, the universal desire that life may be resumed in another world to be revealed when death shall have done his work, are testimonies that the world is on the whole beautiful; that existence is on the whole dear. The prosperous are usually the complaining. The pleasure seekers are commonly the suicides. The prosperous complain because the world is conducted on moral principles; the pleasure seekers commit suicide because they have never looked for solid satisfactions, and such delights as they have create disgust at a world made not for appetites, but for hearts and consciences. To cultivate a habit of looking on the bright side of the world, and a principle of living close to real things, is the best antidote to such atheistic fears as these. "The instincts teach," says Emerson, "that the problem of essence must take precedence of all others—the question of Whence? What? And Whither? And the solution of these must be in a life, and not in a book." When the life comes how easy the solution appears! It is easy to believe in a beautiful world when the sun rises in June; and in the presence of a persistently bright spirit, bright not from felicity of temperament, but from perseverance of faith, the chimeras of the un-

believers vanish like the wild creatures that make terrible the night by their cries. In presence of a true man who does his duty, unbelief seems a thing to be apologized for. The nearer one lives to the daily realities of existence the less he feels like doubting the health of the world.

A brilliant writer of England has made familiar to us a definition of God which has the merit of simplicity, as well as of originality. It is as little open to criticism as a definition can be. God he calls "a Power outside of us that works for Righteousness."

A Power outside of us,—of the existence and reality of that none can doubt. Many recognize power outside of them and power only; the play of vast forces against which man has as much as he can do to maintain himself. At moments we are unmindful of it; only at moments; for no sooner do we reflect on any incident of existence than we become aware that we are in the grasp of tremendous forces before which our lives are as leaves in the Autumn forest. No man ever truly lived who did not feel the awful presence of these powers. Their vastness and comprehensiveness and irresistible strength make the burden of the atheist's argument. For the word "God" if it have any intelligible meaning, stands for order, harmony, beauty, goodness, and the apparent recklessness, fury, pitilessness of this power

outside of men ; its seeming indifference to human happiness and welfare, make it for some easier to deny the existence of God than to believe it.

On the other hand people of emotion and passion are often led by the omnipotence of this power outside of men, to believe in too much God. Everything to them is God ; there is a God for each stock and stone and plant ; a God for everything they have not made or done themselves. The larger part of their life may be spent in efforts to keep this terrible power at a distance, to propitiate it, elude it, buy it off. Hence the ugly thing called superstition, the worship of a power, capricious, wilful, immoral that must be bribed or cajoled into harmlessness. The openings into superstition in this direction are numberless still ; a few are closed, but enough remain unshut to admit people any day into its gloomy recesses. In ordinary times men occupied with their own activities, and absorbed in their own achievements, scarcely think of this outlying power. But ever and anon something occurs which they cannot account for something they did not intentionally bring to pass, would not have brought to pass on any account, would have prevented had they foreseen it, would escape if they were swift enough, would repel if they were wise or strong enough,—a famine, a flood, a commercial crisis, a social uproar, a political revolution,—the

power outside of them shows a ghastly presence, and at a signal from the priests they crowd the churches, and put up prayers for deliverance. So many things go on all the time that human beings have no hand or voice in, so many things happen occasionally that they have no control over, it is not wonderful that awe deepening into trust, or rising into terror, is excited by the demonstrations of force, whether breaking out with the suddenness of miracle, or rushing along with the terrible precision of law. There is no probability that the demonstrations of this power in any but usual forms will for ages on ages to come, be so familiar to untutored and unreflecting people that they will not be staggered or startled by them; it is not likely that it will ever be entirely disarmed or disenchanted. It is at present inconceivable that human knowledge, however it may be increased, will so thoroughly adopt into human activities the power outside of us that no manifestations of it will excite surprise. Indeed, as knowledge increases, wonder increases, too; science reveals more marvels than it disposes of; and the power the savage cowers under, the sage adores.

The question of questions is, therefore, does this power work for righteousness? If it does, the heart of the Theist is satisfied. There may be a thousand

things he cannot explain: a thousand things that are an unfathomable mystery to him: problems he cannot so much as begin to solve: questions he cannot pretend to answer: doubts he can do nothing to still. Notwithstanding all this, if on the whole, on extended lines, in the history of nations, in the experience of ages, it can be made to appear, with a brilliancy a good deal less than that of mid-day, with a shaded and clouded clearness, that the power outside of us, which works with such unremitting energy and such unflagging continuance, works for righteousness,—for righteousness of a general kind, for righteousness of that description which none but intellectual and morally cultivated people will be able to recognize as righteousness, which undiscerning and passionate people will reckon to be no righteousness or rightness at all, but crookedness and waywardness rather, if not cruelty and perversity,—with as much as this the heart of the Theist will be content.

To prove that the power outside of us does work for righteousness is more than I shall undertake now, —is more than I would undertake at any time, if I had leisure and space unlimited. For to establish that would require a range of knowledge, an understanding of processes and laws, a faculty of discernment, a gift of reasoning such as no man who lives,

no man who will live within half a thousand years can pretend to. None but the extremely foolish undertake to dogmatize about that; none but the witless claim to know about it. Thus far we have material for faith but nothing more; faith that gives substance to things hoped for and evidence of things not seen. Materials for faith are within reach of any that care to possess them.

There are those who doubt if righteousness be on the increase. But it seems to me that if they would cease to make bitter assertions out of their cynicism, and would lift up their eyes to see what actual knowledge has disclosed, their tone must change. For to deny the fact that the surface of the material globe has gained in richness in the course of millions of years; that the animal creation has advanced in beauty of form and excellence of endowment; that human life has become longer, safer, more comfortable, more privileged, more full of promise; that man is gradually getting the better of his enemies, overcoming his vices, emerging from the condition of the beast into the condition of the rational being;—to deny that there has been progress in sciences and arts, progress also in social arrangements and the type of individual character, is in our day reckoned nothing short of audacious. The doctrine of development, under some form of statement, is ac-

cepted by thinkers of every important school in our generation, scientific and popular, liberal and orthodox. It is the watchword of the age. Now development suggests progress, and progress suggests advance, and advance suggests rightness of direction.

Who or what is responsible for this advance? Are men responsible for it? Surely not; not even indirectly. With much of it the human race has had nothing whatever to do, even indirectly; with most of it the human race has been associated merely as agent and tool. As we reflect on the matter, the proposed achievements of the human race, the deliberate resolutions and thoughtfully directed efforts have been and are very few and almost insignificant. In any age and country the men and women who make it their business, or any great part of their business, to improve the condition of society in any particular are quite inconsiderable in number and force. The band of reformers has never been large, and they have seldom succeeded in accomplishing the ends they had in view. When they have succeeded, as in the case of the abolition of slavery in America, their success was due, and was by the confession of the worthiest among them admitted to be due, to the operation of vast moral and social forces which embraced the whole civilized globe. The abolitionists did not overthrow slavery: The

accumulated moral sense, the gathered experience, the heaped up and massive indignation of mankind abolished it. It was the same with the African slave trade; it was the same with the English corn laws. There comes a time when the sea of moral being that has been slumbering, wakes and deals a shuddering blow at some ancient barrier. These agitations are by some ascribed to changes in the moon, and the people who are influenced by them are called lunatics; but it is understood by the intelligent, that the unconscious humanity which is deeper than the will, is answerable for these agitations, and that obeys laws that human discovery has never sounded.

How small is the number of people who endeavor to improve themselves! Yet the level of character is continually on the rise. Most are absorbed in the search after pleasure or profit, the amusement or the benefit of the hour. And yet the moral level of all is insensibly lifted. This fact surely encourages the faith that the power that works outside of us does make for righteousness. It is indeed exceedingly difficult for individuals to cultivate themselves much beyond the mark of the better portions of their generation. None but the very few do it, or try to do it; none but rarely endowed persons have the motive or ambition to do it, appreciate the importance of doing it, or command the resources for doing it. The increase of

moral sentiment, moral conviction, moral worth and principle in a community is one of the mysterious things it is good but never quite satisfactory to contemplate. It makes us think of the powerlessness of the collective will of man ; it makes us mindful of our dependence on something outside of ourselves to which for want of a better word we give the name of God.

Is there any satisfaction to the heart in dwelling on this name? The atheist says there is none, but dissatisfaction rather; for it calls our thoughts away from actual duties, substitutes contemplation for toil, worship for work, faith and hope for conviction and purpose. If this were true, then theism would be a practical error, and the thought of the power outside of us, although making directly for righteousness, would be disabling. Atheism, that awakens responsibility, puts conscience on its mettle and stimulates human endeavor, is better than theism that lulls people to sleep and encourages them to dream.

It is as supplying a background and support for energy that Theism is precious to the men who hold it in faith; that the workers may not feel that they work alone, that the reformers may be emboldened and sustained by the action of powers all the more trustworthy because inscrutable; that the champions may have the promise of victory before

their eyes, and, undismayed by the hosts of their enemies, unweakened by the sense of their own impuissance, may fight on to the end, the theist contends for his belief. To stand alone is hard; even when the loneliness is loneliness among men; but when it is that utter loneliness of the will that finds no companionship in the invisible powers which faith and hope bring near, only here and there one can bear it. The creed of that one is no creed for humanity. We may respect him, may admire and honor him, may concede to him a certain moral grandeur, but he must not expect mankind to feed on his mental foods. If the unthinking multitude look at him askance, with a kind of horror, he must not complain.

And if brave men need support in battle, much more do sorrowful men need it for their weariness. Think as cheerfully as we may of the world we live in; look as brightly as we may on the experiences of life, it is still true that existence has its melancholy side. Whether or no the sad days are more than the joyous, the disappointments more than the satisfactions, the bitter more than the sweet, certain it is that the sad days come often, the disappointments fall fast, the bitter cups are frequent and full. To this side of our human experience, the faith of Theism comes with the holiest

consolations. "It is indeed," says an eloquent writer, "the greatest thing allowed to mankind, —the germ of every lesser greatness: and he who can say 'I have faith in the Almighty,' makes a higher boast than if he could declare 'the Mediterranean is my garden, and mine is every branch that waves upon its shores, from the cedars of Lebanon to the pine upon the Alps!' How often in the stifling heat and press of life, when trivial cares rise with dry and dusty cloud to shut us in, do we wholly lose our place in the great calm of God, and fret as if there were no Infinite Reason embracing the vortex of the world! In loneliness and exhaustion, when the spirits are weak, and the crush of circumstances is strong; when comrades rest and sleep, and we must toil and watch; when the love of friends grows cold, and the warm light of youth is quenched, and the promises of years seem broken, and hope has but one chapter more, how little do we think, as the boughs drip sadly with all this night rain, that we lodge in Eden still, where the voice of the Lord God rustles in the trees, and bespeaks the blossom and the fruit that can only spring from tears."



THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD.

Oct 31st / 1875

On successive Sundays we have discussed questions relating to the Existence and Providence of God. There is one point, not touched in those discussions, a point of deep interest and even of fundamental concern, which I wish to bring up to-day: This, namely, whether we have a right to discuss such questions at all; -whether we are warranted in assuming that the Being we term God has any such resemblance to our thought of him that it is becoming or safe for us to reason about his mind and will. The Hebrew Scriptures earnestly and repeatedly insist on the incapacity of the human mind to comprehend or even apprehend the ways of the Supreme Power; they declare that his thoughts are not as our thoughts; that his ways are past our finding out. "Lo, He goeth by me and I see Him not; He passeth on, but I perceive Him not; I go

forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him." "Thy way is on the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Still, notwithstanding such frequent declarations, the believers in the Scripture, perpetually speak as if they knew all about the Unknown, understood perfectly the designs of the Inscrutable, were in the secret confidence of the Hidden One; as if their thoughts of him were just, their descriptions of him accurate, their expectations from him, well grounded. They claim a closer acquaintance with God than they would presume to claim with a bosom friend, and predict his action in any special case more forcibly than they venture to forecast the future of the stock board or the caucus.

Now the one point I wish to press 'is this; that our *thoughts* of God are all we have;—Whether they be wise or foolish, deep or shallow, just or erring,—our thoughts are all we have. God we have not. He has never been approached or seen, so as to be described. From the nature of things, he is altogether out of the reach of our faculties. Think about him we may; but when the wisest have exhausted their strength, it is still no more than a thought. The picture framed by a human mind, is inadequate of course, and subject to correction. The Trinitarians think of God as three Persons in One;

the Unitarians think of God as an undivided Unity ; the Theist thinks of God as a holy Being ; the Pantheist thinks of God as the Soul of the world ; but each has only his thought ; neither has a superhuman knowledge. The thought of one may be correct, the thought of the other may be incorrect ; but the thought of neither is anything more than a thought.

In this, it is not implied that God does not exist as a being, but only that we do not apprehend him as a being. It is impossible for me not to believe < that the universe is governed by an intelligent will ; but it is equally impossible for me to imagine the nature of the intelligence or to conjecture the movements of the will. Believe in the Supreme Power, trust it, repose on it as we may, it still is a reality beyond our comprehension or our reach. This is a point that cannot be seized too firmly. The stronger my faith in God, the more modest my estimate of such an idea of him as it is practicable for me to form. The notion that he might be such a Being as mind can conceive, no greater, no wiser, no nobler would drive me into atheism. It is only by remembering faithfully the utter inadequacy of my thought that I can make him an object of adoration.

Is it urged on the part of some believer in revelation, that all this is true, but is inapplicable to him ; that while human thoughts of God are inade-

quate, divine thoughts of him are not; that the thoughts of the Christian believer are not human but divine, being communicated through special inspiration, by God himself, and written plainly in the Scriptures? Is it urged that the Scriptures expressly declare "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God for they are foolishness to him; that they are spiritually discerned; that no man knoweth the mind of the Lord, but that the spiritual who "have the mind of Christ" who is himself the Lord, judge all things?

I reply, that this mind has not been communicated with such clearness or with such authority that its divine character is self-evident to all open minds: that the thoughts about God in the Scriptures are many and conflicting; that no one stands out with commanding prominence; and that, when all is said that can be said, the believer's conviction is still no more than his conviction; his conception of the *r  velation* is his conception, his thought of the divine thought is merely his thought. He has not stepped beyond the limits of his own mind. His thought does not change its character because he ascribes it to God; for *that ascription* may be a mistake. What he calls a revelation may be an illusion; it cannot be more than a persuasion.

Human thoughts about God are of every

character of nobleness and ignobleness. They vary with culture, civilization, phases of experience, moods of feeling. The same person may, in different states of mind, go to extremes of belief and unbelief; may pass from materialism to spiritualism, from atheism to pantheism. After reading some strong scientific book, describing the physical constitution and development of the world, the close connection of sequences and consequences, the slow growth of systems, like flowers from seeds, the mind is baffled and bewildered; force and law usurp the whole domain of providence, and it is impossible to find a place for creative thought or directing purpose. At another time, when the conscience is roused by some moral turpitude, or some palpable wrong it feels impelled to resent and resist, a sense of responsibility leaps into light from the dark, the consciousness of moral freedom and moral power is stimulated, the impulse to dare and do is strong, and the Supreme Power ceases to be a law and becomes a lawgiver—a holy God—the hater of iniquity and the foe of wrong. In another mood one is in the country or by the seaside; the eternal beauty shines upon him from every object, and steals in upon him through every sense; the whole world seems alive, the sky with stars, the earth with flowers and verdure and fruits, the ocean with waves, the woods with insects, flying and creep-

ing things of every form and hue, the very rocks with lichens and crawling plants; the pulses of being are audibly throbbing;—he can almost hear the flow of the all-pervading life, and see the trailing garments of the perpetual creator and recreator as he passes from atom to atom; then he feels rather than thinks, it is born in upon him with an overwhelming persuasion, that God is present in all things, living and breathing in all, painting the lily,* giving fragrance to the rose, sparkling in the dew drop, breathing in the wind, blessing in the rain; not an individual but an energy; not a conscious person but a flowing life. Each mood may be genuine; each impression clear; each inference just in its place and degree, but neither of course is complete or lasting. In another phase of feeling, the same person, lapsing into despondency, depressed by a sense of weakness, crushed beneath the weight of self-reproach and sorrow, in penitential grief or passion of shame will think of God as frowning and angry; will feel like fleeing from him in terror or kneeling to him in contrition; will wish to hide from his face; will pray that his face may be turned graciously towards him; will cry out for help; will call for the Saviour, and be in a frame to ask absolution from a priest. The mood passes, the clouds roll away, the skies are clear once more, the phantoms disappear, the

Godhead clothes himself with light and glory. If the mind rests long in one of these moods, the image of deity becomes fixed and permanent; a dogma of Deity is created. If the mind is a true one and growing, the images vanish, and the thought clears itself more and more as the heavens clear themselves of vapors.

Human thoughts about God harden into theologies by being retained and dwelt on. There is the child's thought. It is conveyed in the lovely legend of Eden. The child does not observe with the eye of science; does not compare; does not reason; has no experience; has acquired no rule for measuring effects or proportions; has no knowledge; of fancies is full. The mind is active, but unregulated; it believes in miracle because it has no conception of order and law, and makes no distinction between probable and improbable, possible and impossible. The rustling leaves on the ground are the footsteps of the God who walks in the garden at the cool of the evening; the murmur in the tree-tops as the wind passes over them is the voice of God speaking to the spirits or communing audibly with himself; he makes the flowers and colors them; he holds the bird in his hands so that he need not fall from the heights of the air; he brings the baby in the night to the parent's arms; he provides food and clothing.

The child asks God for a doll or a drum as simply as it will ask its mother ; will go into the closet and talk with him ; will tell what he has said ; will pour out sorrows into his ear, and propound questions to him with absolute confidence. The child's thought is true for the child, and so long as it is quite natural will do no harm ; it is only when the man—forgetting that the man should put away childish things—makes the child's thought his own, fails to correct it by knowledge and experience, and lives, a mature mind in a baby world, that the thought becomes unworthy and even debasing.

The rude man, violent and cruel, has his thought of God. The ancient Hebrew, contending for the Land of Promise, living in camp, passing his days in battle and his nights in watch, worshipped above all qualities swiftness and valor and annihilating might. His God was strong in battle ; none other could be his God. To order the extermination of the Canaanites, saving only the women whom the soldiers wanted for wives ; to arrest the sun and moon that rout and carnage might be complete ; to blow stone walls down with the breath of his mouth ; to blast armies by pestilence in a single night ; to enable striplings to conquer giants, were God-like performances. All natural and excusable enough in savage people, so long as they remained savage ; the

soldier's bloody but instinctive thought, but a thought that should pass, be deplored and be forgotten.

The bigot has his thought of God ; we read this, too, in the Old Testament. The wars of conquest are nearly ended ; the tribes have become fixed in their sections ; social order and law have become, to a certain extent, established. A king has been chosen ; a priesthood is instituted. Now the " man of God " is recognized as being superior to the " man of war." Saul returns from battle with the Amalekites, bringing their king captive. Soldier-like he respects his royal prisoner and would spare his life. But Samuel, the priestly judge, will not have it so. It is " the Lord's will " that unbelievers should be exterminated. He fiercely upbraids Saul for his wicked leniency, threatens to pluck the crown from his head and remand him to the low estate to which he was born. Then, summoning before him Agag, the captive king, in the presence of the host he hews him in pieces. This is what the Lord is supposed to approve of ; the Lord of the priest. Such a thought was natural in the time of Samuel, but it would be unnatural and unpardonable now. It was the thought of a narrow minded age, and should have been a passing thought, to be repented of and dropped.

Evil proceeds, not from the false idea, but from the *needlessly* false idea ; from the idea that is outgrown and should have been dismissed ; the idea that no longer stands for a perfectly honest and sincere state of mind. A great deal of indignation has been bestowed on the false ideas of God. The indignation would have been directed to better purpose if it had been turned against the error of imagining that the Being we name God corresponds with any image we form of him in our minds. This is the evil, the confounding of our thought about God with God himself ; the reasoning from one to the other ; the identification of our minds with the Infinite Mind, of our intentions with the Absolute Will.

This evil let us try now to measure, as people should who are impressed with its magnitude and anxious to counteract its effects. There is no thought so imperious as that of God ; none that takes such hold on the imagination, is so associated with authority, is so arbitrary in its claim. We must bear all this in mind in order that our criticism may not seem too severe.

1. In the first place it is very obvious that the habit of associating our thoughts of God with himself is deeply injurious, if not fatal, to humility ; nor can anything but presumption and arrogance be engendered by such a process. The greatest sage,

the deepest philosopher, the most eminent saint, so long as he bears in mind the purely human and limited nature of his thought retains his modesty, is teachable, willing to correct the mistakes and more than willing to mend the defects of his intelligence. Newton, one of the highest minds of the race, spoke of himself as a little child picking up pebbles on the shore of infinite being. Goethe, one of the few intellects that deserve to be called "godlike," murmured, as he was dying, a prayer for more light. Far from such minds as these is the spirit of dogmatism and intolerance, the spirit of bigotry and intellectual tyranny. They are glad to know the thoughts of others ; happy in feeling that while they think others are thinking in new directions and by other methods. But the smallest, darkest, narrowest mind possessed by the insane fancy that its thought of deity is ratified in heaven, that there is an infinite being behind his crepuscular lucubration, that the twinkle of his taper is the veritable "Sun of Righteousness" in all its glory,—erects itself like a king, robes itself in the garments of a priest, affirms, argues, judges, denounces, puts by the wisdom of ages, remands Plato to a closet, and Socrates to a corner, talks of "vain philosophy," the "emptiness of human wisdom" and ramps about in the fields of literature as if all there were weeds and rushes.

Such a mind, fortified with this strange assurance, will speak of its own wishes as God's intentions, its own resolves as God's purposes, its own undertakings as God's work, the results of its own performance as the evident interposition of God's hand. It excites itself by the dream of its own inspiration, and carries others away by the magnetism which such dreamers always exercise over sensitive spirits, and revels in the conviction that God is about some prodigious enterprise for the salvation of mankind, because its own faculties are at white heat.

The revival preacher is the victim of this singular delusion. Could he realize that the thoughts he has about God and Providence, however glowing, are still simply his own; that other people have their thoughts, equally sincere—and perhaps more enlightened; that his thought is entitled to influence according to its worth and no more, his whole movement would be arrested. He might labor, conscientiously and intently, but he would labor reasonably, more as a man does who would persuade his fellows, less as a man does who would bear and beat them down. A liberal minister speaking of the revival of Calvinism at present spreading over the country, remarked, and in a spirit that has been commended as one of exceeding candor,—that for his part he had not the presumption to criticize it; that it was not for him

to tell God how he ought to proceed to awaken the spiritual life of the country, nor could he pretend to judge him when he saw him at work. But this is conceding the very point in dispute. *Is God at Work?* That is the question. Certain Revivalists are at work; certain of the "Evangelical" clergy and laity are at work, but that is a very different thing from the working of the supreme intelligence and power. It may be useful and good work; very beneficent and necessary work; work in the performance whereof all earnest men and women may take satisfaction. It is *their* work nevertheless; the credit of it all belongs to them. It is no more entitled to be called God's work, because it is done in the name of God, than the work of their opponents, the work of scientific men, of honest journalists, of worthy merchants, is entitled to be called God's work. In a certain sense all good work is God's work, because all good work is done in accordance with established law. In another sense, none of it is God's work, because it is done with the limited intelligence, aim and intention of men.

No doubt this association of their thoughts with God is a great assistance in their work. If it were understood generally that the thoughts of the "Evangelists" were their own and not God's, that they were doing as they were impelled to do by

their human motives, and not as they were driven to do by the Holy Ghost, their audiences would greatly fall off, their prayer-meetings would be less crowded, their songs and exhortations would produce less agitating effects. They might achieve something, and what they achieved would be the fairly earned result of their labor ; a result too that might last, and could hardly be subject to the violent reactions that make their actual achievements of doubtful value and uncertain character. But they would not produce the excitement they do now.

Does the excitement then, justify the method? It condemns it ; for the method being illegitimate, the results must be illegitimate too. What if some other class of workers, in another field, the social and political reformers for instance, could persuade people that the work they were doing was God's work ; suppose that the antagonist parties in state or social reform were to arrogate the infallibility of God for their moral persuasions, as they might with equal justice, would the excitement they created excuse the dishonesty they practised ? Could it not be charged upon them that they were pushing their cause by false means and under false pretences ?

The mischief in the case of the " Evangelists " is the greater, because the thoughts they entertain of God are not their own, but are borrowed from people

who lived in very different times and under very different conditions. The thoughts, therefore, have no freshness, no living power. They stand for ideas that do not belong to this generation, and perpetuate beliefs that should long ago have been outgrown. God is called in to ratify and sustain what the intelligence of his world has discarded. This is a great and practical evil ; for God is not only thus made responsible for human thoughts, but is made responsible for unworthy, for dishonoring thoughts, such as no vital mind furnished with the most recent information would for the first time entertain. Old errors, misconceptions, childish or coarse beliefs, are thus revived and sanctioned, and the souls of men are dishonorably dealt by ; a mischief than which few greater can be imagined.

2. It must be considered, too, that by associating our thoughts of God with God himself, we make them fixed and immutable dogmas, that abide from age to age, and educate people in error through generations. God cannot change, and if our thoughts of him are taken to be his thoughts, they will catch the durability that belongs to him, and will become institutions ; the human mind will not grow, but will be arrested, and the religious character will be arrested too. The childish beliefs will keep men childish ; the savage beliefs will keep them savage ;

the inhuman beliefs will keep them inhuman. It is not creditable to the progress of the human mind that the thoughts of the old Testament men should still be entertained; but while those thoughts are sanctified and sanctioned by association with the mind of the very Jehovah, this mishap is not avoidable. If the story of Eden had not been contained in the bible, its childish view of God would have been discarded by all but children long ere this; but being written in the bible, and thus authenticated as was supposed by inspiration, adult minds feel obliged to think of God as the child thinks, and in defiance of all knowledge and reason, to picture Him as speaking in audible whispers and appearing in visible shape. Are there none who accepting Joshua's thought of God as equivalent to God's thought of Joshua, think of the deity as murderous and cruel, and justify murderousness and cruelty in the name, not of Joshua, but of God, resisting the pleadings of their hearts, and repressing their sentiments of mercy as out of line with the habits of the Eternal? The man who knows better than to persecute such as hold different beliefs, and feels the beauty and excellence of toleration, dare not show charity to the so called infidel, lest he show himself faithless to the God of Samuel, and displays therefore an ugly temper to his heret-

ical neighbor, when, if it could be revealed to him that the God of Samuel was merely Samuel's narrow and intolerant thought of God, he would honor the earnest seeker, respect his doubt, and, instead of hewing him in pieces, restore him to his place. But it becomes an impiety to tolerate thoughts that God is suppose to hate, when to encourage such thoughts simply as human thoughts, products of hard and sincere brain work, would be piety.

3. For God demands of men, *in their opinion*, what their best thoughts never demand. God, or what is held to be God, is imperious and exacting. No compromise can be made with him. What he is supposed to require must be given without hesitation. If he calls for the offering on his altar of mind itself, with all its contents and all its faculties, with all its earnings and all its working ability, it must be treely brought. If he calls for the offering on his altar of the heart's treasures, of sympathy, charity, kindness,—as he is believed to have done of Abraham, who, identifying his thought of God with God's Being, lifted the sacrificial knife over his only son,—if he calls for the offering of human love, these must not be refused.

Our best and highest natural thoughts make no such demand. They never stultify cripple or muti-

late us ; they expand and strengthen, confirm all nobleness, enhance all loveliness and grace. Whose highest thought of beauty or truth or charity, whose deepest thought of responsibility, duty, human or divine affection, the order of society, the harmony of men, ever suggested to him the necessity of contracting sympathy, withholding pity, refusing aid, chilling expressions of tenderness ? Who, in his moments of sincere worship of what was to him the sweetest and best, ever, on leaving his secrecy of meditation, felt impelled to reduce the dimensions of his intellectual or spiritual being ? What earnest worshipper ever came out of this secrecy without wishing he were a thousand times greater in every fine human quality ? But the idea of God, when associated, as it is in the multitude of instances, with narrow and mean conceptions, arrests the thought, drives it back upon the mind, crowds it in among other and better thoughts, expels them, and occupies their place. As we read the history of human opinion, we are continually coming across this dreary fact. We learn that people have mutilated their bodies in supposed compliance with a divine command, which was nothing else than a vain imagination of their own consecrated by the awful name of deity. Others have mangled their intellects, lopping off their curiosity, starving their hunger for certain kinds of knowledge, freezing their enthusiasm

for certain literatures or arts, shortening the range of their investigations and decrying the worth of their discoveries, as they never would have done had they been free to alter and enlarge their thoughts as the growth of mind required. Are there no educated, and so called intellectual people now, who literally cannot do justice to opinions and views, cannot read the books that convey them, cannot listen to the teachers that communicate them, because God, as they believe, is hostile to them? Thus their finest aspiration depresses them; they are the smaller for their worship; in the very act of allegiance to what they think the highest, they affront their actual highest. The arrested idea blocks their own development. So common a thing is this, and so deplorable so disastrous a thing, that some very noble men would abolish if they could the belief in a personal God, in the hope that by so doing they could remove an obstacle to faith, and open a free passage to the search of the human mind after truth and goodness. It pains them to see fixed types of thought, clothed with divine authority reacting with such terrible force upon the human mind, and making impossible the advance towards worthier conceptions. Better in their judgment no belief in God as a Being, than a belief which obstructs the progress of man. Better no belief in God than a belief that does not animate.

encourage, inspire. The atheism that allows fine aspirations towards an ever greatening glory is better than a trinitarianism that crushes these aspirations, and confines the spirit within the prison of older and gloomier views.

4. Another thought comes up in this connection, which is of profound significance and reach. The ancient difficulty of reconciling the woe and anguish of the world with the wisdom and goodness of Providence, is greatly diminished and all but disappears when we cease to identify our thoughts about Providence with Providence itself, and to make deity responsible for what is due simply to the limitations of our own minds. The consideration that our thoughts are simply our thoughts, that our blindness is not God's light, that our perplexities are not God's intentions, that our doubts spring, not from any absolute ground in the problem itself, but merely from the defects of our understandings, removes at once the weight of a crushing misgiving. Mr. Mill's argument, which was touched on last Sunday, owes its force to the assumption that a *personal Being*, such as we can picture in our imagination, is directly responsible for the suffering, sorrow, loss, ruin and guilt that blacken and curse mankind. Take away that assumption, admit frankly that there is no personal Being corresponding to our thoughts: that the

Being who projected the universe into existence, and is law and guidance and support to it, is a Being of whom we have but the most shadowy outline, of whose attributes we have no fair conception whatever,—and however mysterious the universe may be, however insoluble, at present, its problem, we are no longer concerned to reconcile the ugly facts that we see with Almighty power, wisdom or love.

The agony that good hearts experience at sight of the misery of the world is owing to the contrast between *what they see* and *what they feel*—not between things as they are, and an infinite goodness: for they do not see things as they are, and of an infinite goodness they have not the faintest comprehension. Whether there be a contrast between things as they *really are* and a perfect Being, is not, and cannot be a question for any mortal. Thousands and thousands of people, most people in fact, all save the very few, are never disturbed by the questions that exercise the noble soul, for their souls are not noble. There is no contrast between what they see and what they feel, for they have no eyes for the ugly phenomena of existence on the one hand, and they have no feelings for justice, kindness or pity on the other. They are neither observant nor sensitive; doubt never crosses their mind; the matters discussed so eagerly by divines and philosophers are nothing to them.

The suffering and sorrowful and woe-begone do not as a rule, raise these fearful questions, because no gulf is opened between their *experience of evil* and their *thought of good*. Misgivings concerning the governance of the world arise in sensitive, inquisitive, generous minds, whose idea of the world as it ought to be is daily confronted with the actual facts of the world as they see them. The world is not as they would have it. They dream of Eden and, opening their eyes, behold Gethsemane. But there is no agony in Gethsemane to those who have no dream of Eden.

From this contrast, painful and pathetic as it is, no speculative atheism, no morbid unbelief usually grows. It is only when the dream of Eden is supposed to be a revelation of God, that the staggering, stupefying doubt is awakened. Dispel the dreamer's fancy, detach his thought from the eternal, and instantly the domain of the infinite kindness is open to faith again, and the tortured soul is at rest on the Father's bosom. Hope and trust are restored to their rights, and the assurance is recovered that was supposed to be lost. The questions are not answered; they have simply ceased to be questions; and the business in hand is not to wonder why God allows the world to be as it is, but to do what we can to make the world more nearly what we think it ought to be. A

wholesome duty is thus substituted for an unwholesome speculation, and instead of torturing ourselves into uselessness by doubts, we straighten ourselves into rectitude by action.

Nor let any lightly consider this matter as of small moment. It is indeed of the deepest moment. When we take into account the dissipation of the noblest spirits on these insoluble problems, spirits whose energy the world of society most needs, it comes home to us with solemn force that the matters here dealt with are of living and instant concern. For, at present, the best thoughts of the best men are made instruments of torture to the faith they should heal and uplift. Men seem to be the weaker for their confidences, the poorer for their treasures, the sadder for their worships. They spread their wings to penetrate a bleak region of despair. They are crushed beneath their aspirations. To put men in full possession of their best thoughts, and give them encouragement to make their best thoughts better, should be the aim of all true well-wishers of their kind. To keep the conception of God pure and exalted is of prime importance; and to do that we must disencumber his image of the rubbish which our own minds heap upon it.

It will be urged, in reply to all that has been said, that mere thoughts, even the best thoughts,

stand for little, as practical powers; that men in general are not influenced or moved by them; that men need not thoughts but realities. Yes: but what if thoughts are all we have, or can have! What if realities are beyond our reach, except as thoughts are themselves realities! What if the most ardent believer has nothing but thoughts! We must accept things as they are and not complain because we cannot make fictions stand for facts.

Thoughts, it may be granted must have a background, something behind them, the support and authority of Being. Is it justifiable then to put in a false background, to set up a fictitious something, to fabricate a Being for the purpose? A background indeed there is, a background of Being too, and so much more vast than is vulgarly apprehended, that there need be no fear of its giving way under our pressure; a background of solid reality that brings the whole weight of omnipotence to sustain our thought in as far as it is worthy. In proportion as a human thought is true it lays hold on this reality and has the pledge of its alliance. As the thought gains in truth, the hold becomes firm, and the pledge authoritative. The truer the thought the deeper the earnestness it commands. Ideals are inspirations. The low ideal leaves the moral nature unstirred; the false ideal distorts the moral nature, and perverts

its action; the ideal that is at once lofty and true, purifies and exalts the man.

“Glorious ideal,” cries an earnest thinker, “light of minds, lamp of hearts, art thou not the God whom I seek? Long have I looked for him, this God whom I thought hidden; on the faith of holy books, I searched for him in imagination and conscience; I thought to find him in Nature and in Humanity; everywhere I have found idols. Henceforth my reason shall see in them only poetic fictions. Thou alone art divine: for before thy face all beauty is dim, virtue bends its head, power is humbled. The universe is great; thou alone art holy. For the Infinite Being wonder and fear; for thee alone love, thou God of Beauty and Truth! We will leave thee in thy heaven with the pure aureole of thought. To attempt to realize thee is to make thee an idol, a vain thing, an idol for the imagination, a thing of abstractions, taken out of all related conditions. God of my reason! Long has the faith of mankind pursued thee, held thee, contemplated and adored thee in idols and abstractions! But the day at last has come to see thee as thou art in the glory of thy essence, and to worship thee, as the apostle says, in spirit and in truth.”



THE LIVING GOD.

THE believers and professed believers of our time are greatly exercised with questions, touching the being and the existence of God, are asking earnestly, at all events importunately, whether there be a God, and if there be, how he may be discovered and known. Minds are singularly nimble about this problem. The agility with which people prance and caracole in the purlieus of the subject excites amazement. Such acquaintance with the main lines of distinction ! Such familiarity with the terms of definition ! Such skill in dividing the hairs of argument ! Such astuteness in detecting the traces of heresy, and exposing the point at which orthodoxy parts from infidelity, and belief shades off into unbelief ! Never, it would seem, was there so much interest in knowing what constitutes the saving faith in deity. It is an age of criticism, when the utmost adroitness in de-

tecting the weak places in a neighbor's creed is accompanied by the utmost complacency in laying down the exact terms of one's own. If it were only matter for definition, how neatly all things would be arranged ! If talking and speculating would only meet the exigency ! If God were only a theological phrase, a dictionary word, a form of speech, the debate could go on smoothly enough. Every man might be a heretic in the eyes of his neighbor, the consignments to theoretical perdition might be large and frequent, and nobody could by any possibility be hurt.

But there is a lingering feeling that the power to which is given the name God is something more than a theological term, and that no amount of chaffering will satisfy its claim on the mind. The word "Atheism" conveying the notion that there is no God at all, has an ominous and dismal sound. Few are willing to frankly avow themselves atheists. In some sense the most skeptical will have it appear that they are believers, amid the last refinements of meaning holding fast to a germ of credence. The multitude resent with horror the imputation of unbelief in this supreme article, and regard with something like detestation those who rest under the suspicion of it. To be an atheist is regarded as equivalent to being selfish, sordid, sensual, men-

dacious, unscrupulous, and cruel, in short as being in every just sense of the word inhuman. But why! If we are concerned with mere definitions, if speculative theories of the universe alone are in question, if it is simply an affair for philosophy to settle, it is surely unnecessary to be so much disturbed. Pantheism, atheism, deism, theism, bitheism, and tritheism, so long as each may have something to say for itself, why not be willing to listen to the plea and decide coolly according to the evidence? Why not follow the determinations of the argument, and repose calmly in the peace of whichever theory best commends itself to the understanding? Why should one theory of the universe be presumed to implicate character more than another?

┘ The true, deep reason, I apprehend, for the common abhorrence of atheism is to be found in the persuasion that God, or the power described by that word, is something more than a theological term. The real question is, whether or not this supreme power—define it and speculate about it as we will—think of it and reason about it as we may, is or is not *LIVING*,—a *real power*, of intelligence and will, or nothing at all but a fiction of our minds. There is a lurking conviction that the atheist is one who, whatever he may say, has no belief in *living* deity; that he does not stand with bended or uncovered head in

presence of something that in grandeur, beauty, nobleness, sacredness, loveliness, altogether transcends himself in kind as well as in degree; that he neither trembles nor exults in presence of eternal verities; that aspiration, worship, trust, submission, longing, hope are foreign to him whether as practices or emotions; that he is self-centred and self-circumferenced, determined and bounded by his own individuality; that he swings about in his own narrow orbit, wholly unimpressed and unswayed by the glorious orbs about him, and spins on his own pivot, too much absorbed in his private affairs to heed what goes on beneath him or above. Without humiliation or misgivings, without dissatisfaction or distrust, thinking only of himself, his own importance, happiness, comfort, he seems not to be aware that aught above claims his reverence, that aught around claims his devotion, that aught below claims his fear; a solitary, kindless, aweless, soulless being, who whirls away in the dark, himself darkening continually with that inner darkness which is darkness itself.

If atheism imports this, it is no wonder that men abhor the name of it and employ their utmost ingenuity in escaping from its breath.

But how wild and whimsical their methods of escape! The efforts to find the living God, how

misguided and ineffectual ! There are those, for example, who search the records of the past for evidence that God was alive at some remote period, and among some ancient people. Palestine, they say, was the scene of the divine manifestations. There the Deity visibly appeared, walked among men, wrought wondrous and amazing miracles, audibly spoke in words of teaching, warning, rebuke, promise ; there the heavens opened and answered the earth ; mountains trembled and blazed ; hill tops glowed with angelic forms ; sandy places blossomed ; lilies and waves were pulpits : the lake surface reflected more than the visible skies : graves gave up their dead ; the very winds carried whispers of heaven, as they swept over the face of the common earth. But to verify this, even as history, is exceedingly difficult ; and even if the difficulties could be overcome, the result is only a tradition, a report, a literary record, a probability that there *may have been* a revelation, a reflection in worldly texts of Deity ; no living God, but merely a *reminiscence of one*.

We go to the sacred spot, but no footprints are visible ; the earth is common earth ; the lake of Gennesareth does not compare in heavenliness of beauty with Lake George ; the flowers and fruits on its borders are over-matched by those of our own orchards and gardens ; the mountains are of the same ma-

terial as the Berkshire hills ; the air is no sweeter on their sides ; the view is no more transporting from their summits. The people who live there are not conscious of dwelling on sacred soil ; their wretchedness and ignorance rather betray an absence of suspicion that their environment is especially privileged. Of the people who lived at the period of the supposed divine manifestation, the large majority were no more alive than their successors are, to the fact of the Deity's revival, and were looking back disconsolate to some period, to them remote, when the silence was indeed broken, and the blackness lighted up, and the deathliness stirred by the manifest God.

But were all this otherwise, were the evidence of the celestial theophanies or apparitions irresistible, were the footprints of the God distinctly traceable even yet from end to end of the Holy Land ; were there all imaginable reasons for believing that the Hebrews of the time of Moses, and the Jews of the time of Jesus, were, every man woman and child of them, dumb with amazement or wild with joy at the familiar visitation of Deity ; were the present inhabitants of Palestine proudly and humbly sensible of the honor vouchsafed to them through their ancestors ; still all we have would be the assurance that God *lived once*, not that He *is alive now*, and the practical value of such an assurance cannot be estimated

highly. For what is it after all, but an admission that God is not alive at present, that at present he is about the same as dead? For a God who appeared and then disappeared, is more hopelessly absent than a God who *never appeared*. A God who never appeared may be expected; faith, and love, and hope, being careless time-keepers, can wait long for the disclosure they have what to them are good reasons for anticipating; but if the Deity has been and *gone*, the watchlights may as well be put out, and all the virgins may be dismissed to their morning slumber. A living God is a God who lives here and now, not a God who lived there and then, and the more conclusive the evidence that He lived there and then, the fainter the hope that He will live here and now.

For the same reason it is idle to seek to recover faith in a living God, by imagining a time when he will manifest himself. A deity who is to become visible and audible, one of these days, in the hereafter, when our human life is ended, and our human concerns have ceased, visible in his heavens, audible in his judgments,—certainly can by no stretch of language be called a living deity. A God who comes to life, so far as we are concerned at the termination of a certain number of years! A God who becomes manifest when our present sensibility to impressions is destroyed, and our very thoughts have perished! It

will be enough to speak of such a living God when we have come to where he is, when we have ceased to be what we are, and have taken on the new senses that are to make us cognizant of things belonging to an entirely different sphere;—but for men on the earth to call this a living God would be an unpardonable misuse of terms. A God who lived once, or who is to live by and by, is an absence, not a presence.

The Revivalists perceive the difficulty and meet it by importing a Deity for the hour. They profess to have means by which they can secure his presence and have him, for the time being, within call. As the medium hunters assemble in their chamber and sing vociferously to tempt the spirits who have no taste for the music of silence;—so the believers in a moveable divinity think that if they combine and conspire, pray with sufficient fervor, sing with sufficient pathos, exhort with sufficient fluency, they can induce the Deity to “bow down his ear,” to “pour out his spirit,” to “vouchsafe His blessing,” to “visit and refresh and comfort His people.” The place is appointed; the hour is fixed; the precise moment is announced; an ordinary time-piece tells off the instants of grace; how long the Lord will stay is doubtful; “seek ye Him therefore, while He is to be found; call ye upon Him while He is near.” The brief season passed, it may be too late; the church door closed

knocking may be in vain. But again the doubt arises, if we have yet a living God,—a God of moods and caprices, yes,—a God uncertain, eccentric, spasmodical ; but a living God ? No : should we call him a live man who had to be importuned before he would show himself ; whose periods of activity were intermittent ; who now and then dashed into affairs with great noise and commotion, and vanished as suddenly as he came—leaving people to clear up the ground after him as they could ? A live man is one who runs his activities and his hours together, who puts his energy into successive deeds, knitting day to day and year to year by his purposes, and charging with his own vitality the incidents that await him in his career ; the man who makes himself felt in all the relations of home, business, politics, or whatever else may engage him. Neither history nor prophecy gives us the live man ; experience gives him to us always. An eminent writer, once a Rationalist, afterwards a Romanist, in a book written after his conversion and to explain the process of it, describes enthusiastically his emotions on discovering that God was free, free to come or go, to speak or be silent, to run in the grooves of law or to depart from them ; free to bestow His spirit on whom He would. How little the man could have understood what a Living God was ! What a poor conception of free-

dom ! Had he tarried in the faith he abandoned long enough to understand it, he would have escaped a confession that does so little credit to his rational powers.

The Living God : how shall we describe such a being ? Him we may not seek to describe ; for by the nature of the case He is indescribable ; but the evidence of his being alive may at least be indicated. The most luminous suggestions of the Living God are given by the scientific men who tell us of the processes of nature in the material world. The astronomers who unroll before us the chart of the heavens ; the geologists who decipher the records of our own planet ; the naturalists who explain the construction of plants and animals ; the anatomists and physiologists who take to pieces the frame of man and show how fearfully and wonderfully it is made. The conviction is forced on us as we listen to these men, that the Superior Power, the creative mind, the shaping originating will, whatever it be, is as active to-day, in all ways as active as it ever was since time began ; that there has been no moment of suspended animation ; that the same things are produced, by the same agencies, through the same methods, in the same order, under the same conditions, and apparently on the same plan. The properties of the material world, the properties of

wood, iron, rock, water, are in all respects the same that they ever have been. Light and air conform to precisely the same laws; sunrise and sunset, rain-fall and drought observe the regulations made at the start. The creative forces are still busy, not slumbering for an instant, absorbingly and engrossingly busy; a thousand times busier they seem to us than they could have seemed to the men of Palestine; more active in their daily operations than once they seemed to be in their special and exceptional working; changing water into wine and quickening death into life after a manner never suspected in Judæa. With us it is no matter for conjecture, but actual knowledge, brought home to us in a thousand ways, and accepted by all who have bestowed thought on the subject, that the God of nature has never been more alive than he is at this moment; that creation is successive, not single; a process, not an act; the work of immeasurable ages closely welded together, not of a week or an interval; that it is everlasting and continuous; as constant, as subtle, as vast, as permanent as it was in the imaginary week of Genesis. The universe is conceded by earnest, believing, religious men, not materialists or skeptics, to be not so much a complicated machine, which once made need not even be superintended, as a living abode and ever present manifestation of whatever being, spirit, power it is that men call by the name of deity.

So far, then, the conception of a living God is given ; and how vivid that conception becomes, how glowing and beautiful, how deep and vast, when some illumined mind interprets to us meanings not revealed to the outward eye ! When some poet like Tennyson or Browning, some artist like Turner or Millet, or men nearer home, bring out wonders of beauty, intelligence, truth, from the blank aspects of material things ; open to us chambers of imagery whereof we had not dreamed ; disclose reaches of possibility that seem simply inexhaustible, and make us feel how near to the awakened mind, is the never slumbering mind !

So far, then, the conception of a Living God, is made definite. No hint, it may be, is thrown out in regard to the nature of infinite being ; we are as far perhaps as ever from a knowledge of what God may be in himself ; nay, the mystery of that may possibly be deepened ; still that whatever Power there is, is alive, in every atom of space, in every instant of time, is put beyond controversy.

But nature, as commonly understood, gives us only the ruder forms of this activity. The living God is disclosed in the activities of the human mind more impressively than in any material operation. It does not become us to be overawed by distance and bulk. An ounce of mind outweighs a million

tons of matter. The leap of an affection distances the spring of lightning. The thought of a Newton goes out beyond the confines of the universe; the love of a Fénelon gives music to the morning stars; the winds of intelligence that come we know not whence, and go we know not whither, but which are always blowing where human minds are alert; the waves of feeling that rise and swell and advance and make the ocean of existence sparkle with foam, are better evidence of a living spirit abroad than the stars that gem the night heavens, or the laws that speed light from orb to orb.

✓ The living God is manifest in much higher form in mind than in matter. The activity of conscience is more exalted than the activity of mechanical force. It is only of man that we predicate inspiration. Stones and trees are not inspired. Genius cannot be ascribed to muscle or nerve. The higher the style of human energy the higher the exhibition of divine energy. To the divine there is, literally, no limit. No man has ever exhausted the infinite. On the contrary, in proportion to the power of the draught is the depth of the well. If the living God is seen in the vast, mysterious forces that bear generations and nations of men along over reaches of experience that of their own wit and will, they could not see their way over,—as was the case in our late civil war,

when whole States were carried on as it were in spite of themselves towards issues they not only did not desire, but could not foresee,—much more clearly is it seen in the astonishing power exerted by single persons who, striking the current of some great principle, are swept on as with the wings of a heavenly host, full of confidence, and charged with irresistible strength of persuasion and conviction. A celebrated æronaut believes that whenever he shall reach a certain altitude he will strike a steadily-moving current of air that will carry him smoothly and steadily round the globe. It is no conjecture that when a man reaches a certain moral altitude he strikes a current of moral power to whose expansion and swiftness there is no limit. Hear men speak of the living God who have with unfaltering trust and unswerving courage committed themselves to a humane principle. These are the witnesses it is idle to gainsay ; they are of all times, and numerous enough to put forever to flight the prejudice that God favors special ages and peculiar tribes. Our own seer declares :
 J “There is a soul in the centre of nature and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe. It has so infused its strong enchantment into nature, that we prosper when we accept its advice, and when we struggle to wound its creatures, our hands are glued to our sides, or they beat our

own breasts. The whole course of things goes to teach us faith. We need only obey. There is guidance for each of us, and by truly listening we shall hear the right word. Place yourself in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom which animates all whom it floats, and you are without effort impelled to truth, to right and a perfect contentment."

This is the language of the highest and serenest faith. I quote it that you may know how the purest speak on this great theme. More modest speech becomes us. The truth I am insisting on, can be made apparent to unspiritual minds. Where shall we seek then for the working of the living God in our own city and our own year? Do we discern it in the stir that precedes the effort to produce a grand revival of religion? Is it evidenced by crowded rinks and hippodromes, hymns sung by ten thousand voices, a multitudinous out-pouring of prayer at morning noon and night from churches and chapels innumerable; in exhortations that make assemblies tremble, in the ecstatic shouts of congregations assured of their salvation, in the moans of anxious sinners grieving lest they be lost, in the thronging towards places where the Bible is read, and petitions are sent up that the powers of the world may be converted to Christ? I should look for it rather where men are struggling in faith to unmask some gigantic iniquity, like the

frauds of the Indian ring, or to throw off some enormous corruption, like that which has obtained possession of the canals. I should cast about to see where effort was making to enthrone honest men in office in place of knaves, to restore confidence to trade, to establish true instead of false values for money and the commodities that money buys; I should sharpen my vision to discover the people who, by simplicity and sincerity of life, were making head against affectation, hypocrisy, and emptiness. Here we may be sure of finding the footprints of the living God, here, and surely not elsewhere. Is it said that all such seeking will be vain? that the men who seem to be bent on unmasking iniquity are themselves iniquitous? that the "honest men" are knaves in disguise? that the reformers themselves chiefly need reforming? that the champions of honest government are simply scheming to put themselves into places of emolument and power? that, in a word, it is all illusion, this idea that the living God manifests Himself in any such vulgar utilitarian manner? still, I should say "such ways as these or none." Thus, or not at all, the divine energy is displayed. If these men are not honest, perhaps others are; we will look for them till we find them; if we cannot find them we shall believe that they are simply out of our sight, not out of being. For it is plainly incredible that the

human world should be absolutely deserted by honesty. A certain amount of honorable purpose is necessary to the sanity of mankind. It is the salt that preserves things from putrefaction. If it does not exist in one place it does in another. If it is not found in conspicuous people it must be sought among the inconspicuous. But wherever it is, there is the power of regeneration; there is the living God. Yes, though it be found with people who acknowledge no God, who never worship, who make no confession, its presence indicates the divine presence. For whoever strikes the divine current shares the divine life, and brings the divine revelation. Creeds are of no moment here. Definitions have no significance. The avowed Atheist who accepts the conditions, observes the laws, penetrates beneath the surface to the forces that control incidents; the materialist who conforms to the principles of matter, receives a demonstration of the living God such as is withheld entirely from the disobedient or heedless theist. The live man discovers the live God; and the wealth of the discovery is according to the grade of the life.

It has been often observed that a fresh conviction of the presence and power of the Living God is felt in times of social depression. Revivals of religion come in season of panic and general distress. The

explanation is obvious. Men do not think of the living laws when their minds are full of other interests. It is only when their minds are full of anxiety and emptiness that in their helplessness they turn to foreign aid. But they do it after an irrational and superstitious manner, showing their inexperience and utter ignorance of the celestial powers by the childishness of their behavior. They resemble savages who worship the mountain that has dropped a boulder upon their village, or the child that thinks the wind comes out of the tree tops. Like people suddenly awakened from a deep slumber, they start, utter inarticulate cries, glare, and fling their arms wildly about as if they were beset by invisible foes. A practical acquaintance with the Deity if so we call it, that lives in the healing elements of matter and mind, and operates daily and hourly to restore men to vigorous health when folly has made them sick, would save them the labor of calling in from some remote quarter outside of the world, a being who is only remembered because he had been so long away. Times of distress, even like the present—are indeed provocative of thought on the existence and attributes of a Living God. No time could be better for such inquiry. For it is when life in us is low that the fulness of the divine life is most clearly manifest. But manifest where? Where, if not here, in the

stern, steadfast, ragged, unerring facts that stand out gaunt and terrible, now that the winds of adversity have swept away the flowering shrubbery that covered them in the sunny prosperous weather. How the living realities of God stand out in such years of mental impoverishment ! With what steady rush the eternal flood pours along ! No prayers or intercessions stop the tide. The stream will not desert its channel, or swerve from its course, or abate the rapidity of its overflow, because foolish people who have planted their grain in unsafe places bewail the fate of their poultry yards. A whole people, comprising the inhabitants of many states—clamor for renewed prosperity. There is not a man or woman or child old enough to wonder why papa does not buy new clothes, that does not wish that the mills might be once more in full operation, business active, industry employed, labor demanded and rewarded, real estate restored to its just valuation. Hundreds of brains are busy with expedients for bringing back prosperity ; the lamentations of suffering and poverty rise louder from day to day, but the living deity shows no signs of relenting. Banks crumble, firms totter, bringing down ruin on hundreds of helpless people ; but the weather-cocks that indicate the course of the ethereal currents still point inexorably in the same direction. Thousands must remain out

of employment till they can be honestly employed. Business will continue dull till it can be conducted on a solid basis of values. In the panic of 1857, a sturdy man wrote "This general failure, both private and public, is occasion for rejoicing, as reminding us whom we have at the helm—that justice is always done. If our merchants did not most of them fail, and the banks too, my faith in the old laws of the world would be staggered. The statement that ninety-six in a hundred doing such business surely break down, is perhaps the sweetest fact that statistics have revealed—exhilarating as the fragrance of swallows in spring. Does it not say somewhere 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice?' If thousands are thrown out of employment, it suggests that they were not well employed. Why don't they take the hint?" If we would but return to the God who lives in first principles, cease from wild speculation, check over production, incur no debts we cannot pay, and pay our debts in solid values that all civilized men recognize, the Living God would need no invitation to make his blessings felt by high and low; plenty would return, and with plenty, gladness and praise. A revival of faith in the simple, old fashioned, too familiar laws of commercial honor and honesty between man and man is the revival of religion we need. If half the zeal expended in the endeavor to bring to bear supernat-

ural aid were devoted to the task of begetting conformity with the rules of order and success that are as familiar to us as our nursery speech, the desire of every heart would be accomplished. God is not far off; He is only too near. It is because He is the Living God that we do not see Him. It is because we think of him as a God dead or absentee, that we clamor for His presence.

At the time of the recent accident from the broken fire ladder by which brave men lost their lives and families were plunged into misery, I was asked if I saw the hand of Providence in all that. Not the hand only, I replied, but the whole arm, the whole person, the very soul of Providence. Had not Providence been leading the way for untold centuries to the invention and manufacture of that very fire ladder? Had not thousands of ages been granted for the testing of wood and iron? Had not the mechanical forces, so called—weight, tension, resistance, leverage, been tried by experiments innumerable? Is it not perfectly well known precisely how much strain any machine can bear? Are there not scores of engineers and mechanics who must, every day of their lives, declare, and declare positively, under oath as it were, how many ounces or tons it will do to place on a given column of stone, iron or wood, in a given position? Does any one pretend to say that Provi-

dence has not kept its word in this particular instance? Is it so much as whispered that the ladder would have given way and flung the men to the ground, if the well known conditions had been complied with, and the machine had been taxed no more than its strength justified? It seems to me that Providence has foreseen everything, has measured with its eye every inch and atom, and made sure as fate every contingency. -But why did He not make so sure that the catastrophe could not happen? Because to have done that would have been to retract the declarations of ages, would have been to declare that the method of experiment, apparently adopted ever since man appeared on the planet, was a bare pretence after all, a mere "fetch," not seriously intended; that the virtues of caution, prudence, forethought, fidelity which had been under painful cultivation for a million or so of years, were of no manner of account. A greater improvidence than this could not be imagined. A Providence that could to all seeming exert so much prevision and take so much pains, and then allow that the prevision was at fault and the pains wasted, would be scouted and mocked at by the ordinary housekeeper and nursery governess. A Deity who could do that would simply deny His own existence, turn atheist on His own account, commit an eternal suicide, not merely kill Himself, but abolish Himself

by eradicating His very memory. He would be deadlier than dead; He would flout the idea that He had ever lived.

But might there not have been some expression of regret over the catastrophe, some sign of pity for the sufferers, some evidence of sorrow for the wretchedness of the widows and orphans? Tenderness! Think of the tenderness expressed in the patient education of the iron and wood for their sacred functions; in the tedious process of instructing men in the knowledge most essential to their own happiness; in the training of mankind in fidelity to the conditions of their own safety! and after all this gentle forbearance, and pitiful consideration, and compassionate forecast, never for an instant intermitted, and exhibited up to the last moment, is it fair to ask for more? To demand that providence should shed tears over those who have flung its compassions to the winds? Should express sorrow that its own laws had been fulfilled, and its own predictions had come to pass? To me there is deeper sentiment of grief in the silence, unbroken by reproach, that follows these wilful and foolhardy defiances of the life of ages. If the compassionate Lord of life could have been induced to utter any voice, it must, one would think, have been a voice of indignant remonstrance against the block-headed stupidity and bot-

tomless folly that after centuries of demonstration will coolly take it for granted that nothing has been established, that God is not a living being after all, but only a ghostly fiction. "Nature is pitiless!" says Victor Hugo: "she never withdraws her flowers, her music, her joyousness, her sunlight from before human cruelty or suffering. She overwhelms man by the contrast between social hideousness and divine beauty."

The Living God is the only God there is. He does not *come to life*; He lives. To think of Him as absent, is to forget Him. We read the stately psalm beginning "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me," and wonder how the writer of it was able to strike so deep a chord. The wonder ceases when we come to know that calamity and contempt driving him back upon the simple realities of life, had opened in his wilderness the springs that are never exhausted. Coming to life himself he discovered that God was perennially alive. His was not so much the language of inspiration as it was the language of human faith and hope. As the drilling of an artesian well brings water from the "footless mountains" hundreds of leagues away, so, by drilling beneath the surface into the depths of common human experience, one brings the grace of the dew that falls on the sightless hill tops of eternity.

ALLEGIANCE TO FAITH.

Oct-3^d/1875

THE subject of this address is the Radical's Allegiance to Faith. The purpose of it is to show the ground of that allegiance, and to quicken the feeling of it in liberal breasts. Faith may be defined as reason's pledge to beliefs that transcend actual vision and knowledge. Loyalty to faith has always ranked high among virtues. To have no faith at all has in all times been held as a sign that the mind lacked spirituality and earnestness. To have a faith and be disloyal to it is branded as apostasy, the most heinous of guilt. The test of allegiance to faith is the amount of ease, comfort, or other external good that is sacrificed to it.

It is a general impression not among so-called Orthodox alone, but among liberals also, that the allegiance of the latter is slack, and the inference drawn is that they have no faith that commands

allegiance, that loyalty to faith is a thing unknown, and that it is on the decrease in proportion as, becoming "liberal," men lose their hold on positive ideas.

I will allow the alleged slackness to pass for the moment unquestioned. Let us try to account for it, and also to remove it. That the zeal of the so-called Orthodox, as displayed in conspicuous works, the expenditure of great sums of money and of vast labor on religious effort of all kinds, is greatly in advance of anything the liberals can show is an open fact. Indeed if "works" be the accredited evidence of faith, the faith of the liberals must be reckoned exceedingly small, for their performances in the way of sustaining and spreading their ideas bear no comparison with those of their "evangelical" neighbors. This may be explained in part by the comparative fewness of their numbers; but it may be doubted if the performance of radicals is in fair proportion to their numbers, letting alone the consideration that zeal makes little account of numbers. Numbers will hardly explain zeal, neither will the greater amount of wealth. As a rule Orthodoxy is richer than liberalism. Conservatives as a class are richer than radicals. It may be that wealth makes people conservative; it may be that the structure of the conservative mind is better adapted to the acquisition of wealth. On either supposition, men of liberal opinions have never

been distinguished by the abundance of their worldly possessions.

But here again, it must be remembered that in all charities and operations wherein feeling predominates, the poor give with far greater freedom than the rich. Nearly all religious operations are carried on by the multitudinous small offerings of the poor, and where the poor are not numerous their contributions are usually out of all proportion to their means.

We come nearer to the point where we mention the effect of Sectarianism in stimulating zeal. In fact, zeal is nearly commensurate with Sectarianism. Sectarianism multiplies parties, builds churches, starts newspapers and magazines, ordains ministers, founds colleges, libraries, lectureships, institutes, mission schools; maintains ecclesiastical powers, sustains missionary effort, stirs up the competition and rivalry that keep religious people on the stretch to outdo one another. The decrease of the Sectarian spirit would leave many a cistern empty, and make many a channel dry, and turn exulting and abounding rivers of enthusiasm into thin trickling streamlets of muddy and slow moving water. The Sectarian spirit being the spirit of envy, distrust, rivalry, deepening into bitterness and even hate, stirs up the acrid and malignant temper that is unscrupulous in the pursuit of its ends. The average man

spends more on his antipathy than on his sympathy, sacrifices more to crush his enemies than to aid his friends, will sooner give his life to gratify his rage than give a small portion of his goods to prove his loving kindness. More than one wears the crown of the martyr who went to the stake to maintain a prejudice he would rather burn than yield. Now, in the true liberal the Sectarian spirit is extinct. It is against his profession; it is abhorrent to his intellectual nature. He makes its suppression a duty, taking himself severely to task if he finds a vestige of it remaining in his mind. He can neither fight for a creed, nor spend for a creed. Such enthusiasm as he has must be an enthusiasm for religion pure and undefiled, for the beauty and truth of ideas, for intellectual principles freed from all alloy of private or class prejudice; his allegiance is to truth uncompromised and unadorned. It must not be expected that an enthusiasm like this will make any show beside the noisy, hot, partisan fanaticism whose ambition is for party triumph.

That the popular religion gains adherents through the promise it holds out of worldly emolument and success, need not be said. Orthodox allegiance certainly is more lucrative than allegiance to radical views. "Evangelicalism" is rich and popular; it controls opinion; it commands the avenues to power

and place; it has the key to social favor and distinction. But the allegiance of the self-seeking is no help to any faith. They strengthen the side they abandon, and pull down the institutions they patronize. They are a plague of mice and locusts, devouring the field they occupy. They are an army of traitors, dangerous in proportion to the clashing of their weapons and the vehemence of their "hurrah." The apparent weakness of liberalism from the desertion of the multitude who go where there is most to be got, is a real strength.

No doubt the blandishments of worldliness will account in large measure for the apparent overflow of enthusiasm on the one side, and the apparent subsidence of it on the other, for people will put themselves forward when their interest requires them to do so, and will make noisy demonstrations of zeal when they would attract attention and secure the patronage they look for. They who solicit favors occupy front seats. Indeed, forwardness is a sign of insincerity. But powerful as worldliness is as an ally of any popular faith, other-worldliness, as it has been happily called, is an ally much more powerful. Orthodoxy offers the heaviest conceivable bribe to cupidity in its promise of salvation from misery hereafter. Having on either hand the angels of terror and of trust, pointing on one side to heaven and its

deathless glories, on the other side to hell and its endless agonies, and making loud profession of its ability to open the one door, and close the other to mortal men, it plays on human hopes and fears in a way that the multitude are wholly powerless to resist. Fortified with the authority of ages, bold in the support of traditions reaching far into the depths of antiquity, backed by the witness of learned and earnest men, eloquent with the language of consecrated scriptures, having at its command all the arts of superstition, it is able to lash into fury or to subdue into tenderness the tossing, fluctuating emotions of mankind, extorting from them treasures of gold and silver, costlier treasures of affection thought and duty, the sacrifice of personal will and being. It can move the soul to its depths, and compel an allegiance made up of the heartiest gratitude and utterly consecrated love. 1

It is no cause of wonder that a religion like this gains devoted adherents. It were indeed strange if it did not; strange if the allegiance of its multitude were wanting in any quality of passionate intensity. It is common among liberals to say that the multitude are attracted to this religion by selfish motives, and that their loyalty consequently is lacking in every noble attribute. But is it fair to bestow the ugly word "selfishness" on the honest

desire for eternal felicity? Is there one of us who would not give in his allegiance to the Orthodox faith, if he admitted its claim to ensure painlessness, and peace, and joy for so much as a century after death? Truly there is nothing ignoble in love of the soul, even though it were purely private and personal, supposing that love to wrong no fellow creature. To be indifferent to such tremendous issues as Orthodoxy presents, granting its right to present them, would indicate a degree of moral deadness that might take one out of the category of humanity.

But it must be conceded that Orthodoxy does not allow people to be satisfied with an assurance of personal and private safety in the hereafter. It ceaselessly urges the duty of saving others from woe. Its missionary efforts are untiring. In fact, its churches are missionary societies, working in many ways at the task of interesting mankind at large—everywhere, of all conditions, in all latitudes and longitudes, breadths, and depths of ignorance and depravity, in this one concern—the safety and felicity of their immortal souls. The enthusiasm of religion discharges itself in endeavors to fulfil this task. The zeal burns for this; for this, money flows in rivers, and men spend themselves in armies; for this, stations of prophecy are planted on the islands of the sea and in the wilderness.

Liberalism can make no such appeal. The claim of Orthodoxy is to her a baseless assumption. She accepts no such philosophy of the future existence; and if she did, she might question the title of any Church to award to human beings the meed of their destiny. Liberalism claims no loyalty or devotion on the ground that she has a voice in deciding the fate of human creatures after death. She neither drives by the whip nor allures by the prize. She neither terrifies by menace nor wins by promise. The excitements of passion, whether of love or of fear she discards. In her view the future, whatever and wherever and how long soever it may be, is conditioned on the present. The *next* life, according to its notion, is the *nearest* life. However high into the heavens the structure may lead, the foundation must be laid in the terrestrial soil.

→ But has not Liberalism, even here, at this very point, a ground for making an earnest appeal to reasonable men? Letting go the region after death as an undiscovered country, and confining regard to men where they are, the task is to discover the laws of character; to ascertain the rules of wise, just, healthful and noble living; to establish and reveal the conditions of goodness, and make them so evident and attractive, that men and women shall wish and purpose first of all to justify themselves to their

own hearts, to their fellow-men, and to the principles of the ideal world; to teach and urge them so to live that the future shall be determined by their character and be quietly allowed to take care of itself as a thing in any event provided for and so to be dismissed from anxious consideration. This is the aim and intent of Liberalism, and in the discharge of this it may honestly feel an enthusiasm profound and intense, even if serene and still. The liberal says "Amen" to the declaration of the stout reformer who being admonished by a friend of the danger lest in his devotion to the cause of humanity, he might forget the concern of his own soul, replied: "I have not time to think whether I have a soul;" but his applause is given to the implied sentiment that the concern of the soul is best looked after by him who is diligent to keep the soul strong and sweet in the qualities of kindness, courage and faithfulness to duty, inasmuch as these constitute the soul, and to be destitute of these is to be nothing short of soulless.

This is Liberalism's first claim to the loyalty of its adherents, and a very strong claim it is; for character does not come of itself; neither are the laws and conditions of character so easy to discover or so simple to understand that they need no interpretation; nor are the claims of character on the love and service of mankind so evident that they

require no earnest, eloquent and continuous presentation; nor are the issues of character in consequence so clear that none need feel called on to unfold their grandeur or illustrate their splendor. If the ordination of a separate ministry be justified that people may have due regard for their welfare by and by, a separate ministry is even more justified to the end that people may have due regard to their mental and moral welfare now; for if there be anything more difficult than another it is to see clearly the way of noble living and to walk in it with unswerving and unfaltering steps. So long as the path of wisdom is so crooked, narrow, thorny and cloudy as it is; so long as men are confused as they are now by passion and prejudice, by whim and caprice, by fascinations and enchantments innumerable, there will be work enough for prophets and preachers, and call enough for seasons of meditation and worship. If all the appliances of Christendom now working so industriously at the conversion of mankind, were turned to the labor of making mankind clean, respectable, honest and kind, it would be none too much. We should not wish to dispense with an altar, a priest or a symbol. And when Liberals shall see that this is their calling they will rally to it with an alertness that will effectually silence the accusation of lukewarmness that has been heard so long.

And let not the Liberal be touched by the insinuation that his lack of enthusiasm is simply what might be expected in one who holds a negative system. We have heard this story too long. Very true it is that enthusiasm for a negative system is impossible. Faith must be positive to awaken zeal and command allegiance. Faith in negations is no faith. And very true it is that in years gone by, in the early stages of its development, Liberalism was mainly a system of negations, and to the rigor of its denials owed what strength and popularity it had. To pull the old theology to pieces was its avowed purpose : to disprove the Trinity, undeify the Christ, expose the logical and the moral weakness of the doctrine of vicarious atonement, hold up to denunciation and ridicule the belief in human depravity, pour wrath and scorn on the dogma of everlasting perdition, detect the inconsistencies and errors of Scripture, and prove the groundlessness of ecclesiastical and dogmatical assumption. There are those who still pursue that old method, taking the creeds literally, raking up horrible doctrines that never had general acceptance and fastening responsibility for them on Churches that never entertained them, bringing to light expressions long obsolete and quoting them as declarations of living faith. But these persons are few and

they hold no important place in the Liberal school. A new method has succeeded to the old one and supplanted it. The task undertaken at present by thoughtful Liberals is the task of interpreting the beliefs their fathers protested against and discarded. To understand what those ancient beliefs meant when they were fashioned is the problem before the Liberal of to-day. For surely they meant something; they were the creations of long, earnest, and consecrated thought; they voiced the deep convictions of men profoundly moved. The meaning may be acceptable or otherwise, may be true or untrue, may be justified or not, by actual knowledge. But at all events in the time of their formation they did mean something, and something often very different from what the words import to modern readers. Even such doctrines as the essential depravity of human nature, the imputation of sin, the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, the destruction or damnation of the unbelieving, the perdition of unbaptized infants, had an interior meaning which it is necessary to discover if we would render justice to the human mind, or comprehend the unfoldings of thought in humanity. To do this is no slight undertaking, and no small service. To do it successfully would be an achievement for which the reward of gratitude would be richly due. It would clear up some

of the darkest passages in history, and straighten out some of the crookedest by-ways of the mind. It would reveal the surest and safest way of combating superstition, and delivering men from the snares of ignorance, and the pit-falls of credulity. Liberal teachers are doing no more important work than this. Already good has been accomplished in unexpected measure. Mysteries have given up their secret. Dogmas have disclosed an innocent and even friendly intent beneath their prickly rind. Ancient scriptures have become intelligible; ghosts have been laid; and whole regions of thought have been disenchanted. When now it is considered how much this kind of investigation is needed, and how far-reaching the results of it may be, there should be no lack of interest in the movement that inaugurated it and that presses it on. If Liberalism confined itself to the business of doing this, it would work positively in the cause of human enlightenment and emancipation.

The burden of superstition is still heavy on the breast of mankind. Ever and anon some astonishing example of it comes to our knowledge, and makes us all but despair of the education of the people. In Catholic and Protestant Churches equally, in all Churches, wherever the word religion is spoken, superstition is an actual power. It is a power that

must be disenchanted, for it is too strong to be overcome, and the way to disenchant it is to let the beams of a "kindly light" into the gloomy regions where it has its birth.

This positive attitude Liberalism takes toward the beliefs it used to assail as abominable errors. The position is an interesting and commanding one. And when the view taken of obnoxious Christian dogmas is extended to the theologies of other religions the character it assumes is exceedingly grand. Christianity ranked the deities of other religions among demons. Orthodox Christianity to-day denounces as evil, beliefs that are at variance with its own. Liberalism more cordial because more believing, puts the most generous construction on all faiths, studies them from within, gives them credit for sincerity and for enlightenment in their day, accepts them as part of the intellectual history of mankind, inserts them as links in the spiritual chain that binds the soul of generations together, is eager to make them honorable witnesses to the noble striving of the race after truth. How inspiring such a view of faith in comparison with the view of the bigot who denounces, of the fanatic who persecutes, or of the dogmatist who merely stands still and affirms! If zeal can be enlisted in the maintenance and defence of fixed opinions, how much more should it

be enlisted in their resolution and illumination? How cheering the summons to support a movement which contemplates rendering full justice to the aspirations of mankind, bringing harmony out of the discordant utterances of faith, demonstrating the fraternity of earnest thinkers and deep feelers in all time, and setting towards the light faces that for centuries have been clouded with the shadow of misapprehension! This is the allegiance that Liberalism asks of its friends.

Liberalism asks for allegiance moreover on the ground of the positive ideas it holds up to the gaze of mankind, and of the new light it sheds on these ideas. The words it uses are the old words of faith that religion has always employed, and which still stand better than any others for the great conceptions that have awed and exhilarated and consoled humanity, the words God, Immortality, Duty, the Moral Law. Fraught with rich meaning these words always are; but how much deeper and richer the meaning is with which Liberalism charges them!

The word "God" for instance has been by no religious system largely interpreted so as to cover the accumulating facts in regard to the constitution of nature, and the increasing knowledge in regard to the laws of the outward and inward universe. One of the oldest words in human speech, a word charged

with the highest meanings the mind could entertain, its significance was still limited by the limitations of the mind. The word held no more than was put into it, and as very little was put in, it contained very little. Having narrow senses attached to it, it remained narrow and definite in itself so that it became a theological term instead of a term descriptive of the deepest reverence and the broadest thought. It is painfully surprising to consider the petty fancies, the preposterous notions, the wild, rude, barbarous fictions that have been fastened on the word; to reflect how the word has been monopolized as it were by sects and sections of sects; by local associations of creed-mongers, by companies of logic choppers, fabulists, mythologers, prodigy hunters, class leaders, and wire-pulling revivalists; it is melancholy past expression to remember how the great Name that stands for the best we think and the grandest we imagine has been used as a spell to conjure by, as a catch word to rally a crusade against intellect, or a watch cry against human nobility. A keen writer has said with perfect truth that a complete knowledge of God is the privilege of the utterly ignorant. The ignorant have seized on the divine name and have made it synonymous with every kind of stupidity and foolishness. It sometimes seems as if the word "God" was doomed and could not be res-

cued from the hands of the idolaters. Yet it is worth an effort to save it. For there is no other that speaks to mind, heart, conscience, soul, as this does. No other can or ever will be accepted. It is part of the task of Liberalism to redeem it, to release it from the thralldom of definitions, and make it voice the mind, heart, conscience, soul of to-day. And what a task that is he only can imagine who knows what boundless wealth of suggestion is contained in the terms employed by science in its full range, and by philosophy when it rises to its full height. If it could overarch the greatest minds as it presses down upon the smallest, it would consecrate a temple compared with which our Churches are as mushrooms, springing up in a night. Then what new and bright interpretations of Providence! What fresh ideas and practices of worship! What sweet lessons of trust! If Liberalism aimed at nothing else than the justification of this majestic word, it would have a claim on the allegiance of the best minds.

But the service it renders to the conception of God it renders, or would render, to other words equally sublime of import and equally venerable from association. The word "immortality," for example. How grievously has not that been abused by the system-makers in every period! To the Roman Catholic it suggests an indefinite term of purgatory,

ending at last in a fixed condition of blessedness or misery. To the Protestant it suggests the waking from a long sleep at the sound of the trumpet, the loud summons to the bar of the Supreme Judge, trial before the Christ, the admission to a monotonous blessedness, or the consignment to an equally monotonous agony. To the Theist it suggests endless effort, discipline, progression, and ultimate repose in God. To the Pantheist absorption in the divine beatitude. To the Spiritualist a renewal of the satisfactions and joys of the present existence. But these interpretations are all partial and insufficient. None of them exhaust or begin to exhaust the capacities of the term. None of them can claim to do more than throw out a hint of those capacities. All confine the conception within limits of individuality that render impossible the play of the full personal power. All think more of pain and pleasure than they do of elevation and influence. All turn over the chances of having a good time, as if that was the chief consideration, and do no justice to the promise of perpetuating character and leaving a trail of moral force behind to help on the work of improving the world. Liberalism would fain fill out the idea of immortality, so as to make it report all that the noblest aspire to as well as all that the ignoblest dread, and all that the sad and lonely sigh

for. It would fain make the belief stand for something good and inspiring to people who have no faith in continued personal existence, and no assurance or desire of assurance, that they shall renew hereafter the relations that perhaps have been none too blessed on earth. It would increase the number of believers in immortality, by multiplying the forms in which the belief may be honestly and powerfully held; it would abolish the distrust which the several classes of believers feel towards each other, and encourage all of whatever school to conspire as fellow-believers in making the dream of the hereafter encouraging and sweet. Is not this an end worth hoping for and striving after? And should not all attempts to promote such an end be welcomed and aided by all worthy means at command?

Take another example, the Moral Law. Liberalism has an ambition to do for that conception the same service it renders to the beliefs in immortality and God,—affirming it not on the strength of ancient and world-wide tradition, but on the strength of universal and organic fact. It reverently reads the Decalogue; it heeds with awe the magnificent consent of nations in their declarations respecting the authority of conscience, the doom of iniquity, and the blessedness of righteousness; it weighs all that can be said in favor of the moral intuitions of the human soul;

and then it fortifies all these testimonies by bringing up the facts which prove that the atoms of the globe, the particles of matter which compose the human frame, the incidents of mortal existence, and even the invisible thoughts, purposes, determinations and deeds of men are strung on the iron thread of law. In a word, Liberalism multiplies the sanctions of rectitude, extends its dominion, gives certainty and absoluteness to its sway. Letting the old readings stand, it offers new readings in infinite variety, bringing the awful verities home to all sorts and conditions of men, to Bible readers and to such as never open a sacred book, and making scorers feel that there is no escape from the judgment that is decreed to all deeds, good or evil. In doing this, Liberalism makes new classifications of virtues and vices, new definitions of good and evil. It erects natural standards of judgment in place of conventional and artificial ones, abolishes a host of technicalities, breaks up the coverts where certain iniquities have been hidden by priests from human eyes, and brings forth into the light of approving day troops of scared virtues that have been compelled to flee away and hide themselves from the gaze of men. It abolishes the monopoly that the priesthood has claimed to decide what is good and what evil, and judges all actions and principles by the same unvarying rule. A task

this of the utmost delicacy and difficulty, not to be entrusted to the lawless passions of men and women who are merely determined to deliver themselves from restraint and riot in the indulgence of instinctive license, but to be taken in hand by thoughtful people who clothe their minds with the sanctities of goodness. A task, if there be one, to be taken up by those who still preserve the traditions of rectitude that the holiest have honored. It is a task that Liberalism takes up in the name of religion, and in performing it, it calls for the sympathy and assistance of all who have practical faith in efforts to promote the higher culture of mankind.

There remains unmentioned yet one ground on which liberalism puts forth a claim to the allegiance of earnest men. It is the only system of religion that frankly confesses that the realm of truth is still, to practical intent, an unexplored tract, and that looks for fresh accessions of knowledge on every important subject from quarters at present all but unknown. Every other system of religion forecloses truth, claims now to possess, if not actually all there is, yet the best there is; all that is of prime importance, and the secret of that which is unessential. Every system makes bold to declare what is and what is not worth having; every system has the effrontery to say how much it is safe, and how much it is unsafe to enter-

tain. Romanism arrogates infallibility for the Church. Protestantism sets up a title of infallibility for the bible. Both declare, with unflinching emphasis, that revelation is closed, and that there is only danger in straying beyond the distinctly marked lines of text and doctrine. The walls of the Holy City bristle with guns pointed at the men who would bring in sheaves of corn gathered in other fields. The most liberal of the Protestant sects adhere to certain sacred landmarks of definition which must not be disturbed.

Liberalism alone keeps every question open, expecting more light to break, not from "God's Word,"—the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,—but from the word that is proclaimed in the visible and invisible universe. It seeks the truth; seeks it by the aid of reason; seeks it with the clue of knowledge; seeks it in every sphere where it may lie. It attacks with courage the old problems, looking for new solutions. It abates no jot of hope that it may attain to something like knowledge on the matters that have always attracted and fascinated the human mind. Not doubting, but believing, it stands on the watch with unsleeping eye, questioning the sentinels on the hill-tops and the watchers in the valley, and crying, with untiring importunity, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" This attitude of the earnest truth-seeker is extremely

noble. It is an attitude that only the few perhaps can take in perfect fidelity, but the few who do take it are worthy of all recognition and honor. The pursuit of truth, simple and unalloyed, has engaged the highest minds of the race, and has crowned them with everlasting dignity. To love the truth, to hope for it, pray for it, labor for it, serve it, is the mark of the superior mind. To be indifferent to the truth, to be a skeptic towards it, to wish to shut it up in formulas, is the mark of the inferior mind. Great men believe that truth is still to be found. None but small men believe that they have found it. For to believe that truth is yet to be found, implies imagination and aspiration, feeling for the grandeur of the world, a sense of larger relations with unseen things, that keep the mind up above the meaner levels of experience. We are enriched less by what we have than by what we hope to have—what we believe to be attainable. Even if the eternal problems of being are insoluble, it is ennobling to try to solve them. Though there be questions that never can be answered, to ask them is not otherwise than exalting. To ask and never be answered, is more honorable than never to ask. Liberalism asks, hoping and expecting to be answered, and that its asking may be answered, it prays for the consenting mind and purpose of emancipated men.

PAYING DEBTS.

An apostle writing to a young man advises him to practice together both godliness and honesty, saying that the combination of the two was great gain. The two virtues seem to be very far apart. Godliness is godlikeness, the height of spiritual attainment; honesty is paying debts. The godly man is one who lives in divine ideas; the honest man is one who lives in human relations. The godly man dwells in soul above the world; the honest man dwells in duties in the world. The godly man is the man of devotion, of saintliness. The honest man is the man of business. Godliness is supposed to be so much more than honesty, that godly men sometimes excuse themselves from being honest; and honesty is supposed to be so much less than godliness, that honest men frequently come short of being godly.

But at bottom the association of the words is just. Tracing the word "honesty" to its root, we

find that the quality it expresses does not fall so far below the quality expressed by the word "godliness" as most imagine. The word is Latin. Open the Latin dictionary at "honestas" and you find these definitions: "honorable character, honorable feeling, dignity, goodness, virtue, high reputation, beauty, ornament, grace." Now, open the English dictionary at "honesty" and you will find strictly analogous meanings given to the word: "an upright disposition, to conform to justice and correct moral principle in all social transactions; fairness, candor, truth, sincerity." In English literature the word bears these fine senses. It is a phrase of nobility in Shakspeare. The honest woman is the pure hearted woman; the honest man is the clear souled man. When Pope wrote the line—

An honest man's the noblest work of God,
he had in view something more than the man who paid his bills.

But as every age has its characteristic virtue, so every age has its own characteristic interpretations of virtue. Words take their significance from the people that use them, bear the impress of the minds that pass them from mouth to mouth. It was in a social world very different from ours that the word "honesty" bore the fine stamp we have seen put upon it by the lexicographers; it was a world of

princes and nobles, of gentlemen and ladies ; a world in which intelligence and breeding set the standard of conduct for a small but select circle, in which personal honor ranked high and loyalty was a quality of price ; a world of individual dignity and personal greatness more than ours is ; a world of aristocratic pride and circumstance and ceremony, wherein "the people" were of comparatively small account, but wherein private self-respect touched a loftier mark.

Ours is a commercial age and naturally puts commercial interpretations on its words. They have, if we may say so, a commercial value : they bear the stamp of the exchange, the trade mark of the factory. Articles of merchandise are called "goods." Prices are styled "values." The question, "What is such a man *worth*?" brings an answer concerning the amount of his possessions. The "good man" is the man whose means are sufficient, whose credit is sound. So the fine old word "honesty" has come to mean with us paying bills. The honest man is the man who pays his bills when presented. He may be in other respects, ignoble ; he may be in this respect, close, reluctant, literal and legal, keeping within the strictest lines of mercantile obligations, paying only at the last moment, and paying not a cent more than the statute requires, keeping ever on the safe

side of fraud, but barely clearing the line that divides knavery from integrity. Still if he does clear that line, if he does keep on that safe side, if he does stop short of cheating, if he does pay his bills when he must, he passes for an honest man. We are sometimes tempted to think that the honesty is enhanced in reputation by the severity that accompanies it, taking an extra fineness of quality from the crabbed reluctance which shows how much it costs to pay. The money that "comes hard" is thought to be the "hardest money;" to give it is a kind of martyrdom. Like the water struck from the rock that otherwise blisters the air and promotes drought, it is more precious than bubbling fountains and pouring streams, that are sources of perennial verdure.

Let us look then at this matter of paying debts; let us see if it does not imply all that the old virtue of honesty implied; let us see if by weighing it carefully we cannot in it recover the noble lessons of a nobler society. Let us take the subject on its lowest plane. Even here prospects of magnificence open. Honesty, we say, is payment for value given, or services rendered; payment in money. But what is money? A symbol. A symbol of what? Of intrinsic and essential value. Money represents labor, toil, physical strength, acquired skill, natural capacity, wealth of accumulated power, knowledge, self-

command, fine tact, ingenuity, feeling, purpose, disciplined will. • In a word, it represents life—muscular, nervous, mental, moral, intellectual, spiritual, life temporal, life eternal. The life blood is in it. It is a symbol of elevation, devotion, sacrifice, for all these qualities are in the worth it stands for. The rags of which the paper is made are the worn out, toil-stained garments of poverty; the gold the mint turns out so bright and sharply cut, is dug from mountains that have been melted in fervent heat, and have in their veins the redness of the original fire. Money stands for all that money will buy, luxuries, comforts, necessities, food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, health, education, literature, art, society, the glory of nature in summer, the advantages of civilization in winter, the countless benefits of society, the best physicians in sickness, the warmest consolation in death, release from the heaviest of life's burdens, the privilege of beneficence, the honor of mankind. He that makes money, makes it first or last from these substances; he that gives money, gives substantially substances of no less price than these.

It is easy enough to pay debts when money is easily earned, is plenty, and can be parted with, leaving the usual resources undiminished; when it carries away with it no private indulgence or personal gratification; when, in a word, it is not missed. But

when money is scarce and comes hard, when it is hot and sweaty with toil, and is not dismissed from the pocket without a pang of reflection that one must have a smaller house, or forego the needed luxury of warm clothing, or give up the country excursion, or refuse some benefit the children are pining for, or pass by the bookstore where lies a long coveted treasure, or the library where a subscription is demanded, then to pay it away rises to the dignity of a virtue. There are circumstances that render the payment of debts noble and even sublime; that associate it with valor, devotion and sacrifice; such valor as the soldier displays on a desperate field, such devotion as the knight might have showed to his liege lord, such sacrifice as a noble might have exhibited in the cause of his king, or a saint in the service of his God. When a man—such a man as it has been my privilege to know—having failed in an enterprise to which he had given all he possessed, withdrawing from the scenes of his successes and the associations of his happier days, lives in obscurity and discomfort, and labors for years at the merest drudgery, till he has saved enough to meet his full obligations, and only emerges into social life when he can do so with perfectly clean hands and a reputation unsoiled, a deed is done as lofty as was ever performed by peer or paladin. Such a man is a worthy successor of the

knights that gathered about King Arthur's Round Table. He has only paid his bills to be sure; but he has paid them with his life blood, with the homage of his soul. In discharging that one class of obligations he has in spirit paid veneration to every class.

But by as much as honesty within such conditions is noble, dishonesty within ordinary conditions is ignoble. If the man who pays his debts when he might plead inability is a hero, the man who does not pay his debts when he can plead no inability merits the opposite name of poltroon. He is the soldier who deserts his flag, the noble who abandons his prince, the knight who turns traitor to his queen. That such a one—though in other respects amiable and kindly, should lose his place in the commercial world, should forfeit credit, confidence and esteem, is but just; that society should withdraw from him its respect, should regard his word as so much breath, his bond as so much waste paper, should cast him out of its service, and refuse to him a share in the transactions for and by which men live, is but fair. For the offense is grave. The man takes life and renders no return in kind; he allows others to work for him and be the poorer for doing it. He spends on pleasure what others have earned with pain. He squanders in idleness what others have amassed with bitter toil. He takes food from the table of the hun-

gry, clothing from the back of the naked, fire from the hearthstones of the cold, shelter from the bodies of the unprotected, and gayly tosses it all off in a bumper of champagne or blows it away in a cloud of cigar smoke. He builds his house on the ruins of good faith, and erects his pavilion on the ashes of human hopes. He uses the heart-strings of human beings as harp-strings for his gay songs, and revives the tradition of the Roman emperor who amused himself with his fiddle while the wealth of the imperial city was consuming in flame, and her magnificences were dropping into dust. It is the habit of certain people to make light of offenses against honesty, as it is the habit of the same class of people to make light of offenses against chastity or sobriety, as if they were a pardonable infirmity to gay and genial natures. It is an evil habit, for it encourages trifling with the gravest interests; and it is none the more innocent for being thoughtless, for thoughtlessness undermines the intellectual basis of virtue, and leaves nothing of enduring worth at last.

But debts cannot be paid in money unless the money carries something of its deepest significance with it; and in this case it is not the coin or the paper that pays, but the heart the payer gives with the gold or the paper. And very few indeed are the debts that can be paid without these. Are there any

that can be? The people that actually serve us from day to day in menial capacities, our domestics, chore-men, household drudges, after their fashion put life into their service, give such hearts as they have, and may rightfully claim a return of life. As I think of what such do give, over and above the labor of their handiwork—how they give their willingness, their interest, often their zeal; as I think of their limited lot, their restricted advantages, their engrossed lives, their dim and doubtful career, their scrimped and fore-shortened existence, I feel as if we did not adequately pay them when we gave them, ever so promptly, their monthly wages. I feel that they have a claim on our hearts too, for kind and gentle consideration, for sympathy and interest. They that put conscience into their work have a right to receive conscience in their pay, and they that put grace into their work are entitled to receive grace in their reward. The good servant is entitled to service. Life for life is the rule.

And how much life is put into ordinary work! How few realize the extent of obligations that is incurred in the natural course of living! The simplest human relations, brought to this test, reveal grand responsibilities. The relation of parent and child, for instance, is one that, if met in the spirit of plain honesty, becomes overcharged with indebted-

ness. To parents who are in any wise faithful and tender, children owe a debt they can never fully repay. The above qualification is necessary, for parents are not universally faithful or tender. The existence such give to their children may be no boon but a curse. Few, probably, can think of their parents with unmixed gratitude, for physical and moral infirmities come from them, diseases or tendencies to disease, drawbacks and disqualifications which at some time we remember painfully and with feelings of reproach. But in ordinary circumstances the child is indebted to the parent for a thousand things that may, in some manner, be repaid, if not in food, clothing, shelter, and other external support, still in consideration, patience, care, tender solicitude. The precept, "Honor thy father and thy mother," is one of the oldest and most wide spread in the world. All the Bibles lay emphasis on it, and regard the duty they enjoin on children towards their fathers and mothers as simple indebtedness for benefits bestowed. The Hebrew Scriptures, of every age of the nation, are particularly strong on this point. The Talmud contains beautiful legends in illustration of it. We read that the aged mother of Rabbi Tarphon came down on the Sabbath to walk in her yard: the Rabbi seeing her go out, rose, followed her, and put his hands under her feet till she re-entered the house.

On her sick bed she told of this to the wise men who came to console her. Thereupon they said to her: "If he had done for thee a thousand times more, he had not done half what the Scriptures command." If sons and daughters, when tempted to criticise their parents for some fault, or to laugh at them for some infirmity, would stop long enough to recall the benefits they have conferred, the sacrifices they have made, the life offerings they have brought again and again, they would be ashamed of the dishonesty that could repudiate such indebtedness. In multitudes of cases, a complete devotion of means and ability would be but a fair return for gifts bestowed.

But do parents owe nothing to their children? That they do owe much, is confessed in the grief felt at their loss; in the unwillingness to part with them on any terms, or for any cause, even when they are an incumbrance and a trouble. The mere hope and expectation of a child is often a joy so intense that no pain or sorrow bears comparison with it. The new prospects it awakens, the new emotions it stirs, the new affections it develops, the new future it suggests, the new heavens it opens, are of themselves an inestimable boon. Already, before it is born, the child has laid the parent under an obligation that never can fully be discharged. Through children the sweetest sentiments come, if they come at all:

gratitude, joy, tenderness, thankfulness to Providence, trust in heaven. To how many they disclose the wealth of the woman's heart, the power of fidelity in the man's will! As the child grows up, the hope may fade; the anticipation may be balked; the prospect may be clouded. But even then, the remembrance remains; the original gift is not taken away; the flower of infancy is fadeless in the heart. In return for all this, honesty requires something besides plum cake and sugar. It requires nurture, tenderness, respect, discipline, education, culture. What dishonesty is more flagrant than negligence or thoughtless indulgence? How parents cheat their children when they use them as toys, or lavish on them the wealth of their caprice, allow them to be idle, ignorant and wilful, and spoil them for the existence to which they have introduced them! The precept: "children, honor your parents," should be supplemented by another: "parents, honor your children." As the debt is not all on one side, neither is the duty. Parents and children might reasonably vie with each other in offices of good-will. Of course nothing could be worse than the establishment of mercantile relations between parents and children; the least suggestion of such a relation would be fatal to the spirit that should exist in the home. But there surely can be no harm, there can be nothing

but good in the remembrance of bounties conferred mutually, and responsibilities mutually shared. If each side will bear in mind its own indebtedness, without dwelling on that of the other, the discharge of it would be a joy, and the existence of a sordid feeling would be impossible.

We hear a great deal about the debts we owe to society, and nothing shows the shallowness of the vulgar notion of accountability more clearly than the tone of feeling in regard to these. People are flip-pantly said to discharge their debts to society when they return civilities by giving a certain number of dinners parties or receptions, leaving a certain number of enamelled pieces of pasteboard at front doors, and completing a certain round of social visits, as if society were an artificial clique or coterie. But society lives by faith and charity. The protection of life and character, by thousands of kind offices, silently performed, is its boon to every man and woman, and honesty consists in reciprocating this kindness. Honesty demands the suppression of scandal, the discouragement of evil tongues, forbearing comments on conduct, and generous judgments of character. Even along the surface of society trickles the life blood that quickens all human beings. The charity of each helps the welfare of all. No amount of complaisance, no packs of cards, though piled miles

high, no elaborate dinners and suppers, however costly and frequent, will discharge the first items of that vast debt which every civilized being incurs by the simple fact of living on terms of civility with fellow-men. When we analyze society, and consider the separate sums that are due to the different orders of men that compose it, the aggregate becomes startling. Think of the debt that all orders of men, from the highest to the lowest, from the proudest monarch to the poorest subject in his dominions, owe to the farmer! Think of the debt that is incurred to the mechanic by every one that uses a weapon, a tool, a utensil of the most ordinary kind! By what agony and bloody sweat the smallest article of use has been fashioned! Does the fashionable woman ever pay the seamstress for the stitches her weary fingers have put into the ball dress? Could she pay, except with tears of compassion and manna from the heavenliest part of her heart, for the anguish that Hood has but feebly described? The truth is, it requires imagination and sensibility to fathom but the superficial depths of all the indebtedness of people of luxury who never knew a want, to the people of want who never knew a luxury. To street sweepers and scavengers, and the wretched purveyors of garbage, the dainty ladies and gentlemen of the metropolis are indebted for the health that enables them to enjoy,

and the beauty that enables them to shine. And to meet the indebtedness how impossible, yet how easy ! Impossible, for the remuneration in money might be made excessive, without recompensing the service ; easy, for kind feeling will satisfy all demands. A recognition of the drudge's humanity would go far to reconcile him to the bitterness of his lot.

“ That is no true alms which the hand can hold ;
 He gives nothing but worthless gold,
 Who gives from a sense of duty.
 But he who gives a slender mite,
 And gives to that which is out of sight,
 That thread of the all-sustaining beauty
 Which runs through all, and doth all unite—
 The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,
 The heart outstretches its eager palms,
 For a God goes with it, and makes it store
 To the soul that was starving in darkness before.”

Less than a week ago, we went through the form of confessing an indebtedness to Washington. But what single item of that huge indebtedness was discharged, or is discharged, or can be discharged, by a people that systematically neglects every principle that he perilled life and character to secure ? Modern office-seekers, paying tribute of praise to the man who would never accept an office except with the purpose to fill it honorably, and never kept an office a day after it became possible for him to lay it down ! modern office-holders celebrating the man who would

not take half his emoluments, and who refused a trust to one perfectly qualified for it, because he was his own nephew !

The fashion of paying the heaviest debts in the lightest words is of great antiquity, but it is no more respectable for being old. It has always been the custom to pay in this kind of coin the reformers and regenerators of society, the men who have removed popular abuses, abolished organized wrongs, extirpated long seated evils. The obligation due to such as these is rarely acknowledged in their generation, as is not strange, seeing that their work involves apparently more loss than gain, and achieves more mischief than benefit. But long after they are dead, and the worth of their deed is confessed, and the bitter words of execration are exchanged for the sweet words of eulogy, and the brass that has rattled and brayed against them is changed into monuments over their graves, the deep debt is neither admitted nor discharged. The wrongs they fought against are committed in other forms, the evils they struck at are cherished under other guises, the idols they attempted to overthrow are worshipped under other names. See how Christendom pays its debt to Jesus—a debt admitted to be of the most unquestionable and enduring kind. He is credited with having rendered to mankind services than which no greater

or more essential can be conceived ; with having brought a revelation of pure truth from the supreme source of truth ; with having made an authoritative declaration of God's purposes to the human race ; with having reconciled the Deity with his creatures by the sacrifice of Himself ; with having abolished the substantial evil in human nature ; with having rescued all men from the danger of everlasting perdition, and opened to all men the prospect of everlasting felicity ; with having brought the divine sympathy close to mortal hearts in their sorrow. To discharge an obligation like this would, of course, be impossible ; it is such a debt as cannot, from the nature of things, be paid in kind. But this much is certain. They who acknowledge it do not pay it by continually saying how large it is, by forever telling him, as he sits on his cloudy throne, how impossible it will be ever to pay it, by pleading poverty and bankruptcy, by uttering honied language of praise in prayer or hymn ; they certainly are not paying it while they maintain the very institutions against which he thundered rebuke, while they imitate the very people who put him to death, while they adhere to the ideas he combated and the rules he discarded. There are services that cannot be returned to the creditor, but must be repaid by kindred services to his representatives. Jesus had this principle in mind

when he said : “ Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of these little ones—done for him what I have done for you—ye have done it unto me.”

The disposition to repudiate obligations seems to be innate in mankind at the present period of their moral growth. “ It is such a waste of money to pay bills ! ” said a witty woman one day to her friend. Take what you can get, without paying for it ; if you must pay, pay no more than you cannot help ; to obtain the largest extension of credit, to reduce the debt to the smallest sum, appears to be the accepted rule among men. The commercial world fixes limits to this kind of performance ; but the social world assigns none. The debts that cannot be reduced to precise money value are paid only so far as they can be so far reduced. Thus teachers never receive their dues. They render to the community the costliest of services ; they give the results of study, thought, culture, faith ; they remove ignorance, dispel superstition, call into active existence the intellectual powers, put men and women in possession of their rational faculties ; the higher orders of them are illuminators, cheerers, comforters, interpreters of providence, communicators of the holy spirit of moral life. The value of these men has been acknowledged by the discerning of all ages. The Jewish Talmud says : “ The world is saved by

the breath of the school children ;” “ A scholar is greater than a prophet ;” “ You should revere the teacher even more than the father. The latter only brought you into this world, the former indicates the way to the next.” “ Even for the rebuilding of the temple the schools must not be interrupted.” “ Jerusalem was destroyed because men neglected the instruction of the young.” And yet no class of servants is so poorly paid as the teachers ; and in proportion to the fineness of their work the pay decreases. The most ideal instructors are the most scantily remunerated. The ideal nature of all obligation is yet far from being understood.

This is startlingly revealed to us in the treatment of teachers who are women. Let it be admitted that good reasons are assigned, in some cases at least, for the lower scale of remuneration conceded to women. Let their physical infirmity be taken into account ; the possibility of interruption by marriage, the blurring of purpose and the unsteadiness of motive under the greater or less expectancy of marriage ; the diminished perfection of work from the same causes, and the actual diminution of its market value in consequence ; admit all this : still it remains true that women work with more delicate organizations, that work draws on them more exhaustively, tells on them more severely, costs them more in pain of body

and effort of will, more acutely tries their sensibilities, hardens and coarsens them more quickly. When they give it they give more with it than men do, and therefore for work of the same quality, supposing it to be of the same quality, should in justice be paid more.

There is one class of teachers of whom delicacy forbids me to speak. I mean teachers of philosophical and ethical truth, teachers of religion as they are called. Were I a layman, as virtually I am, having few connections with members of my profession, being entirely separated from the ecclesiastical and dogmatical order of priests, and wholly outside of the divinely commissioned order of pastors—were I a layman, with the knowledge I have of ministers, I could plead earnestly in behalf of a class of men who do a great deal more work than they have credit for, and render to society more essential services than are ever requited. But this is a subject I must not touch. My purpose has been merely to establish and illustrate the principle that debts cannot be reduced to figures, that obligation is an ideal thing, that life alone can pay for life.

Thus regarded, it would seem as if no obligation could ever be paid at all. Nor could it if it must be discharged literally and in kind. Fortunately the soul of obligation is satisfied, perhaps not on easier

terms, but certainly on terms less intricate and cumbersome. A cordial disposition goes far to repay service, when no other compensation can be offered. A kind word, a friendly thought, even a sunny smile have an appreciable value when they come from the heart. Yes, a sincere purpose to be just and kind in every relation wipes out the heaviest debts, and cancels the weightiest obligations. To wish to be even with mankind is a great thing; indeed it is everything, because even with mankind no one ever was, or ever will be. To be grateful for service that otherwise than by gratitude cannot be repaid, is compensation of the most substantial kind. Is anything more needed than a fine intellectual perception of the indebtedness that exists between the various classes and conditions of men, a frank and hearty recognition of the fact that all are debtors, and all are creditors; that there is no such thing as a debtor and a creditor class; that mutual exchange, fair give and take, is the rule; that if an attempt were made to balance accounts, to adjust and apportion merit, to decide who gave most and who received most, what contribution is of most value, and what of least, what talent might be the better spared—such an attempt must of necessity fail, for the reason that every contribution is needed, and that in some respects each contribution has an indispensable quality of its own

which no other can make compensation for ; is anything more important for society at large, or in small, than such a recognition as this ? Would it not do much to reconcile feuds, allay enmities, draw opposing factions together, and fill the gulfs that yawn between the so-called interests of parties and communities ? Every payment of a debt, even the most trivial and incidental, implies a confession of the general law of indebtedness. Let it be understood that when no bill is presented, a debt may still remain uncanceled, and the spirit of humanity is awakened, that will satisfy all claims.

Thus honesty, which is a rough and crude virtue, as ordinarily interpreted, the mere rudiment of virtue, flowers out in magnificent forms. The tree that is planted in the soil of common integrity, overshadows human homes, and spreads its branches in the skies.

INTERESTS :

MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL.

Sept-10th / 1875 -

MY theme this morning is the material and spiritual side of what we call interests, or material and spiritual interests, as it is more usual to speak. The revival of religion with which so many are concerned at present, has for its object the revival of interest in spiritual things, in things unseen and eternal, in states of mind and feeling. Rightly apprehended all good people have an interest in high things and hold them to be ever the supreme objects of interest. All who think with any seriousness about human life ; all who value character ; all who prize solid happiness, people of mature experience, not “ religious ” people in the technical sense, not moralists only, but teachers, educators, friends of culture of every opinion and calling, unite in maintaining the supremacy of these

interests, however in detail they may differ in regard to the forms they assume. The contrast between things material and things spiritual is felt to be real, though it be left indefinite. The materialist himself, after his manner, admits it if he be a thinker; for the thinker believes in thought, and thought is immaterial: it can neither be weighed nor measured. Good men, they who put goodness above intelligence, deplore the lack of interest in spiritual things, that is, in goodness, as the most distressing lack of all, and work hard to supply it by changing the drift of desire, by creating sympathy with objects of purely human concern, by increasing knowledge, the taste for higher literature, love of art whether in form or color, of music, of social affection, of social reform. To lift people above the brute level is the aim of all educators. That is to interest them in spiritual things. Human things, as distinct from personal, are spiritual things; human interests as distinct from private are spiritual interests.

The managers of a religious revival do not however regard the matter in this light. Their conception of spiritual interests is something quite different, and until we understand it precisely we cannot speak intelligently on the subject. It is they who fix on spiritual things their popular meaning; it is they who control the popular sentiment in respect to them; we

must meet them on their ground, before we can invite any to join us on ours.

What is their ground? What is their conception of things spiritual?

Negatively, things spiritual are things not material, like real estate, houses, equipage, furniture, bank accounts, dress, food; they are things that cannot be taken to market in wagons, bought and sold or passed from hand to hand as merchandise; things which have no relations with time and space, that neither grow old with years, nor shrink with age, nor suffer from wear and tear; things beyond the reach of accident from change of circumstances.

Positively speaking, things spiritual are things supposed to be things "religious." To the churchman, interest in spiritual things is the same as interest in the sacraments, devotion to the rites and ceremonies of ecclesiastical institution, observance of feasts and fasts, passion for prayer books and pilgrimages. With the "evangelical" protestant, interest in spiritual things means interest in the salvation of the soul from eternal misery.

To reach the meaning of this phrase, "The salvation of the soul," we must probe deeper. The Soul;—what is that supposed to be? we get at it as quickly and as closely as possible, when we say that the soul, according to our "evangelical" friends, is that portion

of the human being which puts him in immediate concurrence with God, and is the organ by which he appropriates divine influence. It is the medium of communication between the creature and the Creator, between the recipient and the dispenser of life; the appropriator of heavenly grace. To it is given the rest, the illumination, the guidance, the power of the Supreme Being; the assurance of His love, the pledge of His constancy, the sense of His nearness. The dead soul is, in the common apprehension, the soul without perception of divine realities, or hold on celestial truths. The live soul is one with God; in a certain sense it *is* God—its life is “hid in God.” Were this all, we need not demur, for this may be interpreted in a way to satisfy the most unecclesiastical and untheological mind.

But our “evangelical” friend goes further. He says that the human soul has no *natural* union with God, that such union has been fatally broken and has become henceforth impossible of renewal, except on condition of faith in Christ, the Redeemer, the mediating soul between the human and the divine. Interest in spiritual things means therefore interest in Christ and his mediation, faith in his appointment, trust in his sufficiency, reliance on his word.

When it comes to this, we demur. The narrowness of the definition limits the interest in spiritual

things to a peculiar class of people and virtually absolves from all duty to cherish such interests the great number who neither belong to the church, nor accept the creed. For instance, there are people who do not believe, or who say they do not, in a God with whom it is possible to hold private or personal relations. Have spiritual interests no meaning to such as these? can the so-called atheist have no interest in spiritual things? can they have none, whose God is infinite, the unknown and the unknowable? Would you say of John Tyndal or Herbert Spencer, or even of Ludwig Büchner that, for them, an intelligible interest in spiritual things was something too absurd to speak of?

There are many thousands of people, intelligent, high toned, excellent, humane people too, who have no faith in Christ as the redeemer, no faith in any redeemer at all, no faith in any necessity for a redeemer, no belief in the human infirmity, imbecility, sinfulness that calls for a divine redeemer; no such sense of separation from the source of life, as makes the office of a redeemer reasonable; the Jews, for instance—the Mohammedans, the rationalists, are all these excused from taking an interest in spiritual things? May they persuade themselves that spiritual concerns are nothing to them, and may they be justified on their own ground, in devoting themselves

entirely to things earthly and gross, to self-indulgence, self-aggrandisement, self-display?

Or, again, we are made aware often of the existence of people who have no faith in the peculiar and overwhelming issues of the future life; who do not believe that the supreme concerns of humanity are stored up there; that death marks the dividing boundary that separates the material from the spiritual world; that heaven and hell lie in vast compartments, on the other side of the grave; that essential happiness or misery are allotted there; in a word, that spiritual interests are the interests of disembodied beings. Are *these* people to be excused by their opinions from all interest in spiritual things? Are spiritual concerns of no consequence to them? Nay, suppose one to be a disbeliever in any kind of personal immortality, to be a complete skeptic in regard to the future state of existence, to be a convinced advocate of the doctrine of annihilation at death. Can we say of *him*, that spiritual interests are not of his concern and beyond his apprehension? Christian believers allow themselves to talk as if the spiritual nature of man, and the spiritual meaning of existence absolutely depended on the belief in a future state of being. It looks sometimes as if in their judgment, religion, with all its sanctity and sweetness, would perish if the wall between this life

and a future were broken down and both worlds were thrown into one; if their bottomless hell were filled up, or its fires damped. We seem to be encouraged to think that the whole intellectual world would tumble into chaos if the theological fiction of perdition were discredited; that saints would at once be confounded with sinners, virtue with vice, good with evil, the angel with the beast; that Judas would interchange parts with Jesus, if the black river of death were spanned by natural bridges, or made fordable by natural powers. Truly a most perilous position! A position that seems to justify that stubborn indifference to spiritual things which is so deplorable a feature in ordinary life. What is more usual than to meet people who consider themselves absolved from all spiritual allegiance by the mere circumstance of their not being "christians" in their religious opinion; people who boast of their sensuality, their luxury, their sloth, their coarseness and brutality of taste, their indifference to culture, their insusceptibility to ideal things, their moral skepticism in regard to noble people and noble aims, and all because they doubt the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity of Jesus, the infallibility of the apostles, or the divine institution of the church! as if these opinions had any vital bearing on the question of the reality and worth of spiritual things!

Not from any such doubtful and precarious position do we survey this broad field of interest. Not on any such technical grounds would we discuss the relative worth of things material and things spiritual. The distinction we draw is not local or incidental; the concerns we plead for are not conditioned in importance on times and seasons. The values we assert are not extrinsic but intrinsic. Let me see if I can make this clear.

I. And first it is worth considering that all interests have a spiritual—that is, a purely intellectual aspect, and that this aspect is the noblest. The most solid human interest, or group of interests is, undoubtedly, Government. It stands for force, dominion, wealth, power, patronage in the highest human degree. It controls army and navy, treasury, diplomacy, law, and execution of law. It employs thousands of people, conducts immense enterprises, gives opening to crowds of ambitious aspirants after place and fame; so attractive and imposing is its material side, that the frailest connection with the government is regarded by mercenary people as a cable tether to the rock of ages. But what would a government be worth that existed for no other object than to employ armies and navies, support embassies, take money from the pockets of the many to make the fortunes of a few, provide thousands of

places in custom houses and post offices for people who find that the most convenient way of supporting their families? Would any government on earth be tolerated on these terms? Government stands for law as against anarchy, for peace as against violence, for order as against convulsion, for social organization under intelligence and equity as against the reckless plunder of man by man. They who fill the places of government are supposed to have deeply at heart the interests of the community, the interests of equal justice, fair dealing, harmonious adjustments between class and class. That they have these things at heart is their sole justification for taking office under government, as all men feel bitterly enough when politicians, looking at government and its patronage on the material side alone, use its trusts for their private purposes, obtain places that they may fatten there in idleness, and get near the treasury that they may steal from it. The contempt for the ordinary politician is a confession that politics is, after all, a great spiritual interest, and is outraged when regarded otherwise.

Look at any department of government, the post office for example. Not a few consider the post office as an institution for the benefit of commercial bankrupts; an infirmary for postmasters and clerks. That is the material aspect; others take into account

the revenue that is to be collected from it for the general operations of the government; the material side again. Others affirm the function of the post office to be the promotion, on the easiest terms, of intercourse by letter between the different points in any country and between the different countries of the globe. They think of the friendly messages it causes to flit to and fro, the greetings of sympathy, the congratulations, the invitations, the business facilities, the close communion of sentiment it establishes between the most remote parts of the earth, the opening even to the poor and straitened in lot, of channels of intercourse with their distant homes beyond the ocean, so that the Irish servant-girl in America may feel that she is not cut off from her kindred. The post office is an organ of fraternity, an agency of brotherhood, and as such it means sympathy, support, help in difficulties, strength in temptation, dispersion of darkness, scattering of war clouds, restoration of good feeling, increase of the family spirit, happiness, individual and general. Cheap postage on one side touches the question of income, on the other the question of amity; and while the materialist thinks only of the former, and is quite indifferent whether the rates are high or low, provided the expenses are handsomely covered, the spiritualist thinks of the latter, and is anxious that the rates should be as low as possible

in order that the benefit may be as generally as possible shared.

The interests of business are commonly regarded as material interests, because business deals with money and merchandise : its machinery is the warehouse, the railroad, the ship, the factory, its results are wealth ; but who fails to see that business has its spiritual as well as its material side ? that it means the distribution of the products of the globe, the development of the earth's resources, the reclamation of waste lands, the peopling of the wilderness, the extermination or domestication of beasts, the subjugation or regeneration of inferior races, the elevation of man, the extinction of national prejudices, the abolition of the antipathies of race, cessation of wars, the prevention of famines, the peaceful alliance of the rich and the poor, the strong and the feeble—the diminution of poverty, better clothing, better shelter, better food for the people, multiplication of industries, discipline of powers, augmented means of safety, multiplied securities for health, more skilful physicians, more efficient schools, wiser preaching, larger provisions for the higher education, more leisure and more resources for the improvement of leisure, more social morality and consequently more respect for character ? Surely these are spiritual interests, if any such there be ; and there is not a business man whose

daily occupation does not lie close to these noble domains. Spirituality, for him, consists in keeping before him the possibilities of his vocation, and letting that contemplation subdue the inordinate greed that suggests the monopoly of wealth for private gain.

Thus regarded, material things become the visible emblems of things divine. The spiritual interest so completely dominates that every other interest is but a reflection of it. Things visible are the shadows, things invisible are the substance; as the marriage-ring, which was at first the sign of bondage of the woman to the man, the golden substitute for the chain, becomes the symbol of union, the pledge of mutual constancy, the bond of reciprocal love;—as the national flag, which stood first for national force of arms, stands now for national faith and honor, and carries pride as once it carried terror, in its folds, so the dollar is transfigured into the symbol of the purest humanity. It means bread that is consumed, garments that wear out, draperies that fade, dwellings that crumble. It means also education, art, elegance, beautiful manners, the compassion that relieves misery, the philanthropy that removes want, the providence that tries to meet the requirements of the uncertain human lot, the heroic labor that toils at mending the condition of the world. Spirituality has no more touching symbol than the dollar of gold; for the

metal it is made of as well as the purpose it serves and the stamp it bears, is a testimony to the amount of mind, the fulness of heart, the weight of conscience that can be packed away within a small circumference. It is more significant than the altar; yes, it is more fragrant with high meanings than the cross. It marks the priest in every costume and attitude; it denotes legions of consecrated men.

It is easy to perceive how domestic life has its spiritual side. It is not shown in family prayers or grace before meat, or stated lessons from the catechism, or committing to memory of Bible texts, or instruction in religious opinions, but in the social spirit as contrasted with the utilitarian. The material side of home is always uppermost; the clothing, feeding, curing, teaching, training in decent habits, arranging of hours and engagements, economies of fuel, gas, lights, administration of service, and the thousand things that go to make up material comfort. Add to these the artificial accomplishments, meant for display; the society manners cultivated for purposes of social influence; the show of art and beauty necessary for the maintenance of the proper social position; you are not yet out of the range of purely material interests. But let the members of the household be helpful towards one another, even in ordinary ways, like giving

amusement or instruction, taking care, lending a hand, and the spirituality comes in. It may be carried to an unlimited point, reaching mutual considerateness, forbearance, resignations and sacrifices such as children will show towards parents, brothers and sisters towards each other, the virtuous towards the vicious; such as Charles Lamb displayed to his insane sister; but it begins with the first act of thoughtfulness which has no reference to self. "Paradise is at the feet of mothers," said Mahomet, meaning the mothers who bestow on their children the best they have, not that they may be popular, well married, successful in the common sense, but that they may be men and women, excellent as their gifts allow. There is no higher type of spirituality than this. There is no living for Heaven more dear and positive than this. There is no changing of the corruptible into incorruption, no clothing of the mortal with immortality, no putting on of the angel more literal and visible. The very countenances of those who live at home in this way become transfigured by the quality of goodness that irradiates the heart, and reveal to all men that here are spirits manifest in the flesh. Dickens has described it a hundred times. This mode of spiritualizing home was in fact the burden of his gospel; and the mission of Dickens will be fully fulfilled only when the

true meaning of this lesson shall be apprehended, and a hearty union of families on earth in bonds of daily service and kindness, shall absorb a portion of the interest now felt in the future reunion of families in heaven. There is something grossly material in the longing for reunion on the other side of death, on the part of people, who, on this side, have allowed envy, jealousy, rivalry and ill temper of every kind to make pandemonium of their households. No casting off of the body will change such people into spirits.

II. The degree of interest felt in spiritual things appears in the distance of life's perspective, in the nearness or remoteness of the personal ends sought. It is a question between immediate enjoyment and distant satisfaction. The spirituality deepens as the gratification recedes, because then intelligence and hope come in ; the mind shows itself capable of sustaining a long flight. One of Krummacher's parables runs in this way : A countryman brought home five of the finest peaches that could be had, and, giving one to his wife, gave the others to his four boys. The next day he asked the children how they enjoyed the fruit. "I ate mine up in a minute," cried the youngest, "and mother gave me half of hers. Oh ! how sweet it was !" That was the child's way. The second said : "I sold my peach for money enough to

buy half a dozen very fair ones, and seeing my little brother throw away the stone of his, I picked it up and cracked it, and ate the kernel." The third being questioned, replied, "It was a delicious fruit; so delicious that after eating it, I saved the stone for planting, and mean to grow a tree of such." That is the answer of prudence and thrift, replied the father: but now let us hear what our eldest son has to say. "The fruit," said Edmund, "seemed too good for me to eat; and thinking of our sick neighbor, all hot and dry with fever, I took it to him; and when he refused to take it I put it on his bed and went away." Who enjoyed his peach most? asked the father, "Edmund," cried they all at once. He enjoyed the fruit most keenly who tasted it with his imagination. He most enjoyed it who made it minister to another's joy.

Must we drink the cup of satisfaction with our lips, or can we trust our heart? Is the sense of taste in our palate, or in our affection? That is the question. The spendthrift comes into a fortune, and spends it all, interest and capital, as fast as his hungry appetites can drain it down; dinners and suppers, horses and grooms, wine and women, the turf and the gaming table, sucking it in as sand sucks in water; and when it is gone there is nothing to show for it but a broken constitution and a ruined

character. That is gross materialism. His cautious, narrow-eyed brother allows himself few indulgences, diminishes the number of his wants, saves, husbands, invests, turns his property over and over, exulting in its accumulation, and feasting over the prospect of future riches, of rank among the millionaires of his time. Materialism of aim, less gross but not less thorough. His cousin is a wise economist, estimating his needs soberly, and managing his affairs shrewdly with an eye to solid wealth ; but he appreciates the civilizing power of money, has in view the progress of society, and rejoices to see his funds helping on enterprises of discovery, invention, public improvement, the development of new industries, the opening of new advantages to the multitude. He has a taste of the spiritual life ; he is beginning to live out of himself and in the community ; he consults a large intelligence, and spreads the wings of faith and sympathy ; the human in him is getting the better of the bestial ; his selfhood is expanding ; he is rising above the world of material interests. But a kinsman of his takes a nobler flight into the empyrean by committing himself at once to the etherial element. He is a worker too, a money maker, an economist, wasting nothing on luxuries, keeping his appetites down, making his wants few and simple, but holding his fortune as a trust com-

mitted to him by humanity for humanity's use, and choosing to see for himself that it bears good will with it into the bosom of society. He will remove particular obstacles, will open direct channels, will provide for the satisfaction of obvious wants in his society, will lend a hand to struggling merit, and take care that minds striving for information and intelligence shall be put in the way of obtaining it. This man lives in his brotherhood; he feeds his heart; he gathers in treasures by his sympathy; his best existence is in others; he is spiritually minded; his being is taken up with spiritual things, though his days are spent in an iron foundry or a glue factory. If there be a heaven in store for him it will be no happier than his earth. If angels are hereafter to be his companions, they will be no brighter than the thoughts that are familiar inhabitants of his own heart. It is enough for him that he anticipates the fruit of his labor in happier generations of people.

III. And this reminds us that the question of material and spiritual interests is essentially a question of lower or higher uses. There is no spirituality at all without use. Spirituality begins continues and culminates in use. To be genuinely useful in any way is to be so far, spiritual; to be nobly, comprehensively, humanly useful is to be spiritual in a grand way.

In old times men and women left society and went into religious houses where they employed themselves in piously killing time. These people, measured by our standard, were as destitute of real spirituality as it was easy for people to be; for their lives were of no actual benefit to anybody. The poor fiddler who went about amusing children with his tunes led a more spiritual life. Comte would forbid the study of all subjects that had no direct bearing on human welfare, even of scientific subjects like astronomy, which draw away so much fine intelligence from practical concerns. He felt that the occupation of the mind with visionary matters was no proof of its transfiguration. But how stubborn the persuasion is, that an idle minister is nearer heaven than a square-dealing mechanic; that to read dreamy books of devotion shows a diviner bent of disposition than to laugh and cry over Dickens' novels; that to go to sleep under a sermon is worthier an etherial soul than waiting courteously on customers in a shop! Epictetus says: "Remember that at every meal that there are two to be fed, a body and a mind." He that lives to eat is material: he that eats to live is spiritual. The pleasure that only causes the momentary thrill of a nerve is material; the pleasure that rests and refreshes the nerves is spiritual. The opera and theatre have their spiritual

uses ; churches and prayer meetings often have their material uses. The dress that protects the body and facilitates its motion, serves a spiritual end. The dress that merely adorns the body, while it leaves the sensitive parts exposed, and impedes its free activities serves material ends, though it be made of silk and velvet, and glitters with gems. The old spiritual artists, Angelico and others, draped their beautiful spirits in garments they could not possibly walk in, and only by some supernatural machinery could keep on ; and teachers have represented the spiritual mind in costumes which made quite impossible any participation in terrestrial uses.

The business of to-day is to find the sky in the sods, the divinity in the dust. "Hitch your wagon to a star," says Emerson. He might have added, "Hitch your star to a wagon." The divine mind lets nothing run to waste ; but puts into atoms of water and grains of seed, thoughts that fill to overflowing minds like that of Shakespeare. The meaning of the present, the present moment, the present contingency, the present occasion, experience, gift, how many comprehend it ? We are like the woman of Samaria who, meeting the Son of Man at the well, asked him to give her a Fortunatus' water pail that should be always full ; like children in a garden who will not stop to pluck the nearest flower be-

cause a gaudier one tempts them at the end of the path; we are thinking so much on the felicity that shall come when we are dead, that we cannot stop to pluck the felicity of the day. I sometimes think it would be well if people could for a season completely lose the idea of a supersensual world, of any sphere beyond this, of any being above man, of any state superior to the state of ordinary human existence, and be shut up within the circle of their daily duties and affections. It is a recommendation of small farming that it gets the utmost possible product out of a small plot of ground. Surface tillage will not answer,—to tickle the soil with a hoe is not enough. There must be top dressing and deep ploughing. The farmer must study the alternation of crops, must study drainage and irrigation, must adopt new inventions of implements, in order to avail himself of every atom of vitality the ground will furnish. In this view the system of small proprietorship is favored, as securing the largest returns to the smallest capital.

So perhaps it would be in the larger experience of life. Possibly if we had less world we should make a better use of it. The dream of immortality often involves a fearful waste of time. It cannot be well to allow even heaven to dwarf and stultify the earth. One may as easily have too much here-

after as too little. The hope of another state of being is full of consolation and stimulus, but the stimulus and consolation are healthy on one condition, namely, that the other state of being shall grow naturally out of this,—shall be the oak from its acorn, the flower from its seed, the fruit from its bud; that the corruptible shall put on incorruption; that the mortal shall put on immortality; that the spiritual shall unfold itself from the natural. Spirituality is a quality not a circumstance. Rather than have it regarded as a circumstance, dependent on a physical change incident to a removal to another residence, it would be better to drop the idea of spirituality entirely. What if we could just reverse the old order of ideas and say, that so far from being spiritual in proportion as one lives out of this world, one is spiritual in proportion as he lives in it; that spirituality consists not in putting off the flesh, but in handsomely putting it on, and discovering what a wonderfully elastic and beautiful robe it is. The good hymn says:

And while the world our hands employs,
Our hearts be Thine above.

A deeper piety will encourage a consecration to the world of hearts as well as hands, keeping the two close together in their quest of the divine spirit that makes the world an opportunity, and life an improvement of it.

PHARISEES.

THE subject of this discourse is Pharisees; not *the* Pharisees, but Pharisees. The theme cannot be approached until the fact is clearly recognized that Pharisaism, is a universal and not a local phenomenon. The word "Pharisee" is so closely associated with the passages of the New Testament, in which people bearing the name were denounced in unmeasured language as formalists and hypocrites, that it is difficult to understand its true meaning. Yet even a careless reading of the New Testament should make it clear that all Pharisees were not of the class who exposed themselves to the invective of Jesus. Nicodemus, the eminent Pharisee, whose love of truth and desire for fairness brought him to Jesus, and who sought the interview by night, when calmness and privacy could be better secured than in the day, is certainly described as an exception. The Gamaliel, who, according to the "Acts of the Apostles" gave mild counsel in the case of Peter and

his companions, and procured their liberation from bonds, was a Pharisee, Joseph of Arimathea, "rich man," "honorable counsellor," "good man and just," "who also himself waited for the kingdom of God." The "disciple of Jesus" who offered his new tomb as a sepulchre for the young prophet, was in all probability, a Pharisee. Paul, the apostle of spiritual freedom, spoke of himself as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and boasted of it. The people who asked if any of the Pharisees believed in Jesus apparently referred to them with respect as persons of consideration, judgment, intelligence and piety; as good patriots and good believers. Nay, if opinions are to be taken in evidence, Jesus Himself may be classed among the Pharisees, for His religious views were essentially identical with theirs. Pharisees, it is plain, were not all of the same kind, some were educated, others not; some were thoughtful, others not; some were conservative, others not; some were more earnest, some more spiritually minded than others.

The Pharisees are commonly spoken of as a sect; they were not a sect; they were not a party; they were not a faction. They were the "true Israel." Their place in their time and country corresponded very nearly with the place the Puritans held in England, with the place that members of the Young Men's Christian Association hold to day; with this difference;

that the members of the Young Men's Christian Association are concerned with religious matters alone, while the Pharisees combined religion with politics. This they did from the necessity of the situation. Among the Hebrews of Palestine, Church and State were so closely connected as to be identical. The Church was the State and the State was the Church. Patriotism and piety went together hand in hand. Jehovah was sole King. He made the laws; He appointed the officers; He planted the institutions. The fortune of the people in all respects, in every estate, was supposed to be dependent on fidelity to Jehovah's decree. Obedience to "the Lord" ensured prosperity and happiness. The prophet and the politician were one. Priest and ruler were the same person.

The people who saw this most clearly, appreciated it most profoundly, felt it most earnestly, seized the spirit of it most vigorously, and set themselves the task of keeping the nation up to their fundamental ideas were the Pharisees. Political and social exigencies awoke the zeal of the more earnest Israelites who found one another out, came to a general understanding together, combined force and influence, and became known by their practical aims and purposes, as representatives of certain ideas, leaders in certain movements. They were called "pharisees," that is,

“separatists,” people who kept apart, exclusives, as we should say. The term “puritan” was applied to them, perhaps, in derision. They were spoken of as “the elect.” These names became fixed upon them, and at last were accepted and borne in good faith. They did claim to be distinguished by loyalty to the Hebrew traditions, by devotion to the Hebrew faith, by allegiance to the principles of the Hebrew commonwealth. They did claim regard on the ground that they were the true servants of Jehovah, and the true friends of His people.

Patriots they were and pietists; both at once and both in the same thought and act; patriots and pietists, by eminence above all others; judges of patriotism and censors of piety. As patriots they were narrow and intense, their narrowness running into intolerance, their intensity running into fanaticism. They had but one idea, to preserve the sacred integrity of the Hebrew state against foreign interference and internal change. They constituted the “native Hebrew party.” They detested the Roman power as a usurpation. They abhorred the publicans who collected taxes for its support. They had no patience with the Sadducees who dabbled in pagan politics and tried to introduce into Jerusalem the culture of Alexandria and Corinth. They were exceedingly jealous of all attempts to dictate and

weaken the stern Jewish temper by introducing a taste for foreign literature, art or elegance. As a class they were not what we call "radical," that is, extreme in their views of practical policy. It would be truer to say that as a class they were moderate, averse to uproar and disturbance. The bulk of them may have been conservatives of the existing order, rather disposed to await the providential turn of affairs than to encourage revolution. But whether conservative or radical, they were severely narrow in their estimate of the qualities that constituted the Hebrew patriot.

As professors of religion the Pharisees carried their loyalty to the faith of their fathers, to fanaticism on the side of austerity. They were wholesale believers, who took the faith literally, and with an ostrich-like digestion. All the scripture they could get was not enough for them. They must have tradition too and tradition on tradition, nothing less than the whole counsel of the Lord would satisfy them. They could not lose a thought or the shadow of a thought, a promise or the ghost of a promise. In their zeal to possess the whole truth they turned scripture inside out, applied the microscope to it, counted the chapters, the words; tortured phrases in order to drag out hidden confessions; refined upon texts and with inexhaustible sub-

tlety endeavored to entrap the lurking whispers of the Holy Ghost. In their determination to "fulfil all righteousness" they were scrupulously exact in the performance of every religious duty; they omitted no observance; they slighted no occasion; they missed no ceremony. They tithed the smallest things "mint, anise, cummin," they washed their cups and platters according to the strictest regulations; they measured words, steps, actions. They would do nothing on the Sabbath; they became formal and ceremonious to a degree that passed into a proverb. The Talmud inveighed against this class of men as bitterly as the New Testament did. It speaks of the "plague of Pharisaism," "The dyed ones," who do evil deeds like Simon, and require a goodly reward like Phineas," "Who preach beautifully and act vilely." That all Pharisees were of this stamp must not be asserted nor thought. The noblest men of the nation were Pharisees; the wisest counsellors, the purest characters, the most upright and generous souls. But the men who set spies on the movements of Jesus—who hated Him because he put the spirit before the letter and sacrificed the former to the substance, making of prime importance the intent and purpose of the law, the men, who, for the same reason pursued Paul from city to city, were Pharisees; and the vices that Jesus

charged against them were perfectly natural, we may say, were unavoidable by ordinary minds. The tendency of the Pharisee was to become a sectarian, and a narrow one. There was nothing surprising in his becoming a bigot and a hypocrite. No great party long preserves its virtue. It must not be expected that numbers of men will, for generations, live up to the level of a high purpose. The more active they are, the closer is their dealing with practical affairs; the more entire their devotion to immediate ends, the greater is the danger that they will compromise their principle and finally drop it or pervert it.

The point I wish to insist on now is this: that the worst qualities of the Pharisee, the formalism, the bigotry, the hollowness, the assumption of moral and spiritual superiority, grew directly from the cardinal idea with which they started,—the idea namely, that they were “set apart” for the purpose of purifying and restoring Israel. This idea, however shadowy, however honorable and noble at the beginning, soon made them a sect and gave them the attributes of a sect. The “Separatists” were the “elect”; the “elect” claimed the privileges of their “election”; and among their privileges was that of looking down on their neighbors as less deserving of regard than themselves. And this is the soul of Pharisaism.

That Pharisaism as a fact was not confined to the Jews of any period, need not be said. Of course it was not. It is a universal fact. Christian as well as Jewish, modern as well as antique. It is a fact of history; it is a fact of human nature. Wherever there is separation there is exclusiveness; wherever there is exclusiveness there is assumption; wherever there is assumption there is arrogance; wherever there is arrogance there is bitterness and contempt, formalism and hypocrisy. The principle of exclusiveness makes the Pharisee.

Pharisaism is not a phenomenon peculiar to religion. It is a phenomenon of society. All separatists are in a degree Pharisees. There is the *philosophical* Pharisee, puffed up with the conceit of his intellectual supremacy. He fancies himself living in the region of serene ideas, far above the stupidity and illusions of the vulgar crowd. He comprehends the meaning of things; has an insight into the secrets of the universe. He wraps the cloak of infallibility about him, walks with stately step, and looks down with lofty scorn on the simple souls that grope in darkness, rarely condescending to cast the pearls of his wisdom before the swine of average intelligence. There is the *scientific* Pharisee, proud of his method, and of the results he has achieved by it. Feeling that he, and he alone, is on the right path to

knowledge, and that all others are widely and hopelessly astray; regarding the theologian as an idle speculator on subjects forever beyond his reach, and the "philosopher" as an "idle seeker after mind," he strikes a regal attitude in the intellectual world, pronounces final judgments on systems and opinions, and condemns to the limbo of discarded errors, venerable beliefs that lie beyond the province of his own investigations. There is the Pharisee of society, the member of the privileged order, of the distinguished class, of the fashionable circle, who holds himself apart from those whom he considers the vulgar. This species of Pharisee is very common in aristocratic forms of society. In the days of American slavery he made his presence felt wherever the slaveowner appeared, claiming all the honor, chivalry, disinterestedness, civility, elegance as the peculiarity of his order, and sneering at the industry and thrift of his neighbors as qualities wholly beneath his respect. But Pharisaism survives the overthrow of slavery. The Pharisee of the clique or "set" is as lordly as the Pharisee of the order. His manners are the perfect manners; his morals are unexceptionable; his sentiments are correct; his politeness is the standard.

Every race plays the Pharisee towards some other race. Every religion towards other religions. The

Englishman plays the Pharisee towards the East Indian, the Chinaman, the African, even the Frenchman. The Christian plays the Pharisee towards the Israelite, the Mussulman, the Buddhist. To this day, in the lower wards of New York, the Jew is called "Christ killer" by roughs and rowdies, who, because they bear the name without a single attribute of the Christian, feel entitled to spit their venom on people who, in every human quality are their superiors. On his own ground the Mussulman is a Pharisee towards the Christian. A traveller in the East expressing surprise because certain valuable goods were left exposed all night in a frequented quarter of a large town, was met by an answer that expressed equal surprise at his surprise: "Why not? There is no danger, there are no thieves about; there is not a Christian within twenty miles." The Sec-tarian is a Pharisee towards other sects. He has no doubt that his particular slice of the religion contains the gold ring, and that the rest is only sweetened bread, spoiled for eating by being sweetened. The early Christians called all deities but their own evil demons or devils, painted them black or red, gave them horns and tail and cloven hoof, represented them as breathing flames and darting lightning from their eyes. The later Christians content themselves with verbal descriptions, less vivid in color, but in

respect of quality not far removed from the representations of the olden time. The air of self-satisfaction which the Sectarian assumes, and the tone of lofty superiority he takes on when speaking of his neighbor's differing shade of opinion, calls up with sufficient distinctness the typical Pharisee of the New Testament. The race of Pharisees is not extinct.

Every profession has its Pharisees. There are Pharisees among lawyers, among physicians, among clergymen. Perhaps no one profession has a pre-eminence in the quality of its Pharisees above the rest, though, for obvious reasons, the clerical profession seems to excel. The clerical spirit which is the soul of the clerical profession, is generally thought of as a spirit of arrogance. That it should be thought so is not surprising; that it should be so is not strange. The clergyman has a peculiar education, and a peculiar position. The studies he pursues are such as few engage in, and remove him in large measure from the intellectual sympathies of his fellow-men. From of old they have been considered sacred studies, that imparted a kind of sanctity to the men that pursued them. This circumstance alone was sufficient to remove the profession to a holy seclusion, and raise its members to a pedestal of peculiar distinction. The traditions of mankind

have associated the calling with mystery. Privileges have been accorded to it; it has been protected by law and custom. The person of the clergyman has been guarded with special care, as if his life were more valuable to the community than the life of another man. His property has been exempted from taxation. Offences against him have been branded with a special stigma, and punished with special severity. The clergyman has been regarded as the bearer of a divine message; he has been consecrated by the imposition of hands; credited with more than human wisdom, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. His teachings were received as the teachings of revelation. He was supposed to be endowed with a supernatural power to discern and to impart truth. In a word, he was listened to as an oracle with a docility and reverence bestowed on no other instructor. In fact, he was not looked on as an instructor at all, but rather as a prophet, bearing a commission from the Lord.

That people after a time at least, hold themselves at the estimate that others put upon them, is a fact of general observation. That these men should form no exception to the general experience, was to be expected. The clerical profession became an order, and took on all the peculiarities of an order: the exclusiveness, the loftiness, the self-complacence,

the assumption of superior wisdom and virtue, the habit of speaking as with authority on moral questions, and of judging men and manners by a standard of its own. It did not teach, it enunciated ; it did not instruct, it commanded ; it did not advise, it laid down the law ; it did not reason, it asserted and judged. Of course, in the profession there are, and have always been, men who were quite above the clerical spirit, who lamented it in others and earnestly tried to eradicate it from their own bosoms. But only superior minds have been able to do this. In the body of the clergy the clerical spirit ran high and prevailed. Other professions have loudly protested against its pretensions. Lawyers have resented the sharp criticism on the ethics of their profession, from men who had never made it a study or taken pains to become acquainted with the conditions of its practice. Merchants have been restless under the frequent aspersions that were cast upon the methods of business by men whose habits disqualified them for forming a just opinion of the laws and exigences of traffic. Politicians have asked by what right men who were, from the necessity of the case, unfamiliar with practical politics, sat in high judgment on men whose whole lives were spent in the management of state and municipal affairs, and could tell as no others could, what any special exigency

required. There was something exasperating in the tone of infallibility which was used when argument would have been, to say the least, more becoming. But so long as any body of men are made the repository of the Divine grace and the mouthpieces of an absolute law, what other than this could be looked for?

A good example of the Pharisaism of the clerical spirit is given in the attitude of the clergy towards the dramatic calling. We have here an exhibition of pure Pharisaism. The profession of the actor is denounced simply as a profession, without regard to the personal character of the men or women who engage in it. The average of this may, everywhere and in all times, be lower than it ought to be, nay, absolutely low. But this has not been the point considered. In places and times when it has not been so; when the stage has been adorned by men and women of culture, refinement and goodness, the same anathema has been declared against it. No private work was permitted to reflect credit on the theatrical calling, or was fairly recognized at its value by professors of religion. "Player and vagabond" were used as synonymous terms. Macklin, the London actor, having contributed generously to a public charity, declined to give his profession with his name, not choosing to be published as a vagrant.

Macready, prominent in private purity and gentlemanliness as he was in professional talent, bemoans all through his diaries, the disrepute in which his vocation was held. The older Churches of Rome and of England were more tolerant. But the "evangelical" churches always and everywhere have looked on the stage with abhorrence. No good influence whatever was conceded to it; no power for good was admitted in it; no allowance was made for the moral improvements that time brought about; for the harmless accompaniments and associations of decent periods. It was all bad. The revivalists of England, enumerating the triumphs of the cross, dwell with special emphasis on the conversions of actors. The judgment is not human: it is official. The theatre is counted one of the devices of Satan, and as such is put under condemnation. Of the comparative virtues and vices of the two professions, the clerical dangers on the one hand, and the dramatic dangers on the other, no account is made. It is assumed that on the one side there is all virtue, on the other side all is vice. The sins of the professors of religion are overlooked or excused. The excellencies of the professors of the histrionic art are overlooked or explained away. In the one calling all the conditions are supposed to make for saintliness; in the other all the conditions are supposed to make for deviltry.

It is sheer Pharisaism which seems to say all the time: "Stand aside; I am holier than thou," without any disposition to inquire whether it is holier or not.

In saying this no claim is advanced in behalf of the theatrical profession. It is freely granted that actors and actresses are exposed to peculiar temptations in directions which the clergy know nothing of and can only imagine. They, too, form a class and an exclusive one. They live apart from society in a world of their own, cut off from the world by the condition of their calling, which makes demand on the evening hours, and exacts their attention during the most important part of every day. The theatre is their world, the stage their public sphere: the players are their companions. With these companions they are thrown into very close intimacy in public as well as in private. The plays they enact are at once literature and life to them. They have time to study little else and that study carries them away into scenes remote from the existence around them, into a world that is unreal and illusory. Everything conspires to make them a class by themselves. As a class by themselves, they have habits, manners, modes of dress, conversation, behavior that are peculiar. Their views of life, cast of sentiment, rules and standards of judgment are unlike those of

other people. They have their pet notions, likes and dislikes, attractions and aversions, prejudices and bigotries. Their morality is the morality of a class; it is not pulpit morality, or New Testament morality, or legal morality, or conventional morality; it is the morality of an order. In their way they are Pharisees. Their estimate of the clergy is, as a rule, little if any higher than the clergy's estimate of them. They can be severe, satirical, scornful. Their self-sufficiency is not concealed. The Puritan finds little mercy at their hands. The word "hypocrite" jumps readily to their lips.

The Pharisee is of no class, but of every class. He is an expression of the class spirit. The "Bohemian" may be a Pharisee as lofty in his pretensions as the Conventionalist. There is no Pharisee so arrogant in assumption as the reformer or protestant who denounces Pharisees.

One of the most mischievous effects of the exclusive spirit is its complete arrest of national morality. It constitutes so many small schools of morality, each sufficient to itself, and so prevents the attainment of any general principle of virtue that shall have the same binding force on everybody. It sets virtue against virtue, rule against rule, and standard against standard; and so makes moral appreciation and sympathy impossible. We have

none but class ethics; no scientific, no human ethics. There is a technical morality of the bar which barristers alone are supposed competent to understand. It is created by the relation between the lawyer and the client, a technical relation which imposes duties of a technical character, and implies obligations or release from obligations, according to a code which binds the initiated but none others. The perfect reconciliation of this code with what is called absolute morality has never been effected. There is the technical morality of trade, fashioned by the necessities of making money. The trader, as a trader, apparently feels justified in adopting maxims and pursuing courses of conduct that can hardly be held consistent with fraternal dealings between man and man. Commissioners and agents interpret the moral law often in a manner and practise it after a most eccentric fashion. Exaggerating favorable incidents, concealing inconvenient facts, drawing loose contracts, taking advantage of ignorance, weakness or necessity, all on the plea that "business is business," and as business means profit, whatever is necessary to the increase of profit is allowable. On this plea—good "Christians" will overcrowd tenement houses, neglect to provide fire escapes, or proper sewerage, will rent their premises to gamblers, prostitutes and dram-sellers, will "corner"

gold or grain, or cotton, will "water" stocks and weaken securities. The politician has his code fashioned for the needs of men who trade in the work of electing candidates to office. With us this is a distinct profession, with secret rules and mysteries, comprehended by none save the initiated.

This is no fancied evil, but a grave mischief, apart from the jealousies and bigotries, the rancors, and feuds attending it. The scientific moralist, in his efforts to lay the basis for moral rules that shall bind all men alike, is thwarted at every turn by these sectional barriers, that render mutual understanding and co-operation impossible. The spirit of the clique is fatal to the spirit of humanity.

If there is need of one thing more than another in this world of practice and judgment, it is of sympathy; not sentimental, but moral and intellectual; the purpose and endeavor, on the part of sects, classes, orders, persons, to put themselves in their neighbor's place; to interpret opposite views, establishments, parties from the inside, instead of the outside. It is a task of imagination and reflection, but of no more imagination and reflection than intelligent people in this age of the world ought to be capable of, or ought to be ashamed of being incapable of. Two points are worthy of being kept in

steady remembrance, first, that the world is very wide, and includes all sorts and conditions of men ; second, that these sorts and conditions of men are from the necessity of the case, fellow workers and fellow dependents. These two points are simply and practically true, and the consideration of them is of the utmost moment.

Sentimentalism apart, the sentimentalism of natural feeling, and the sentimentalism of religion, which makes so much of the common nature of mankind, their common origin and destiny, the common providence and common allotment, all go hard to realize. Sentimentalism apart, it is true as daily, practical experience, that men are, by the conditions of their earthly existence, fellow workers and fellow dependents. The tasks of life, the responsibilities of life, the burdens of life, are distributed among them, not so unequally as is usually imagined. No class has all the knowledge. None has all the wisdom, or all the prudence or all the goodness. No class is entitled to insult or impose on, or browbeat another. No class is entitled to plume itself on peculiar privileges, or to claim pre-eminence on the score of special rank, dignity or value of service. We talk about "privileged classes." Strictly speaking, there are no privileged classes in the sense of classes set apart from or above the rest, as demi-gods to be

worshipped, or princes to be served. The word "privilege" is the aristocratic word for opportunity and accountability. "He that is chief among you shall be your servant." The use of a reservoir is to feed the city, not to exhaust it. One has power to make money, another has talent, another has personal attraction; one can teach, another can influence, another can stimulate, another can amuse. Let each do his part rendering its full due to each of the others. We cannot exchange gifts, or situations or parts. In the work of society it would be difficult to decide which class is most important or which could most readily be spared. None can be spared: all are important. In magnifying one's office there is no particular harm, provided the office is better administered so. In rivalry of parties there is no harm, provided the rivalry do not become jealousy or antipathy.

It is not enough that classes should be tolerant of one another, they must appreciate one another; they must cordially recognize the fact of their mutual dependence; they must frankly admit that opposites require opposites, that extremes demand extremes; that foes are friends in disguise—that antagonists are educators. The prince would die but for the peasant, the capitalist would starve but for the

laborer. The poor need the rich, but what would be the condition of the rich if there were no poor? The simple need the wise, but what would wisdom be worth if there were none to teach, guide, instruct, enlarge? The grieving need the glad, but scarcely more than the glad need the grieving, scarcely so much. The vicious would perish but for the virtuous, but the very virtue of the virtuous would decline if it were not trained, educated, shaped, sharpened by perpetual contact with the vicious. Sinners need saints; but without sinners saints would have no vocation. Sinners ought to be perpetual admonitions to saints; saints ought to be perpetual encouragements to sinners. What would sick people do without the strong and well to take care of them? What would the strong and well do without the sick to take care of? I have seen able men and women disconsolate when some poor bed-ridden invalid had been taken from them by merciful death. They were more dependent on the patient than the patient was on them.

Among those who call Jesus Master, there should be no uncertainty in regard to the character of the Pharisaian spirit, and no doubt as to its essential inhumanity.

The Jew hated the Samaritan, but Jesus is described as imparting his deepest thought to a Samar-

itan woman. The Pharisee hated the publican, but Jesus is described as accepting hospitality in a publican's house. The ordinary Pharisee hunted Jesus to death as a revolutionist and a blasphemer; but the intelligent Pharisee, like Nicodemus, seeks friendly relation with him and honestly tries to fathom his thought. So should it be. All together, men are not strong enough to waste vigor in envious, jealousies, hates and divisions. We cannot afford to draw so heavily on our very moderate stock of fraternity as Pharisaism requires. All our combined energy is demanded to discover truth and establish righteousness and institute brotherhood. For as a great teacher has said, "it is the bond of sympathy that distinguishes the social man from the savage: that renders society a possible thing; on its increased strength the future ameliorations of man's estate mainly depend, and by its ultimate supremacy human freedom and happiness must be secured.

THE CARDINAL'S BERRETTA.

May 2^d 1875-

THE ceremony by which the Cap of the Cardinal was conferred on an archbishop of the Romish Church deserves mention as one of those acts which may mean much for religion in America. Whether it means all that some think it does, may be doubted; but at all events it means something, and something to be pondered. An American citizen has been made a Senator in the Pontifical Government, an intimate counsellor of the Pope, a secular prince only inferior in rank to a king. An American bishop has been clothed with all but supreme jurisdiction in the western branch of his Church, has been invested with power to grant dispensations, and to lift up a potential voice in the general councils, in which, according to some, the Church utters the mind of the Almighty.

This honor, which the Pope alone can confer, was bestowed in presence of a vast audience, some attending from curiosity, others attracted by the

s how, many drawn by sympathy with a great multitude of people ; not a few exulting in the demonstration of power on the part of the ancient Church ; more than a few wondering what the ceremony portended. The badge of ecclesiastical royalty was conferred avowedly as a mark of distinction, in acknowledgment of the power and zeal of the Catholic Church in America. It was also designed, it is fair to suppose, to increase that power and zeal, to add lustre to the Faith in the new world, to unite its professors by fresh bonds of allegiance to the Head in Rome, and to elevate the Church on this continent to an equal rank with the Church in the old world. They, perhaps, are not mistaken who see a political design in the act, a purpose to infuse a despotic element into our institutions. They certainly are not mistaken who perceive a religious purpose in it, a design to exalt, glorify and aggrandize the faith of Rome. It will be timely, therefore, to consider how far that faith, simply as a faith, without regard to any political ideas or associations, merely as a form of religion, should be welcomed by us.

It is common to make a wide distinction between the Church as a government, and the Church as a religion ; and to eulogize it in its latter capacity, while denouncing it in the former. As a dominion we hear it said, the Church of Rome is detestable :

as a religion it is admirable. It is the worst despotism and the best cultus on the face of the earth. In secular affairs it shows itself the enemy of civilization and the oppressor of mankind. In the spiritual realm it is supreme in loveliness as it is in majesty. I have heard liberals call it a perfect form of religion, and express an entire willingness that it should be extended as a Faith, provided it could be detached from all connection with civil affairs. Is it a perfect form of religion? That is a question I invite you to consider this morning. Taking it in its best aspect, taking it at its own estimate, is it the best form of religion? Is it best for any class of people? Is it best for any stage of culture? Is it best for any purposes of society? Is it so much better than any other that, simply as a religion, without reference to its affinities or affiliations in other respects, we should feel like encouraging its growth, or can even look with patience on its extension? That the religion has been of great service to humanity in its day, preserving the pure quality of the heart from pollution, and keeping the wings of aspiration steady in a sky black with clouds and stormy with gusts of wind, is not to the purpose. The day before yesterday is not to-day; and the issue before us is an issue of to-day, and the years that shall succeed to-day. The Catholic Religion is commended on several dis-

tinct grounds; not by Catholics only, but by Protestants; and not by these only, but by rationalists, who look on religion as an affair of social police, at best as an affair of public taste. It is on these grounds that I should wish to try it.

I. It is commended as a system that brings the moral and spiritual conceptions within the reach of uneducated people, who, if they apprehend such things at all, must apprehend them by the senses. It is a sensuous faith, a religion of form, sound, color, demonstration. Instead of an idea it gives an image; instead of a sentiment, it presents a symbol. Where Protestantism preaches about the dying God and the Atonement, Romanism sets up a crucifix by the wayside. Where Protestantism dogmatizes about Christ, Romanism paints a picture of him. Where Protestantism appeals to conscience, Romanism opens a confessional. Where Protestantism speculates on the mystery of the Godhead, Romanism celebrates a Mass. Where Protestantism describes virtues, Romanism groups angels and saints, always embodying its thought in visible shape. Eyes, ears, fingers, lips are allowed the privileges commonly presumed to be granted only to intelligence. Put the best construction on all this. Drop the charge of idolatry; admit that the image, picture, sign, ceremony, is only symbolical; that the thing is not an object of adoration,

but only a sensible help to it. Pass by the obvious danger that rude people will be unable to hold fast the fine distinction between the image and the god it represents; we must still ask, does this system of signs and symbols perform the duty of a religion? The visitor in any European Cathedral will be capable of answering the question; and the answer will be emphatic, the nearer the cathedral is to the heart of the faith; more emphatic in Italy than in Germany; more emphatic in Rome than in Florence. The old proverb comes true everywhere, that familiarity breeds contempt. They who can see or touch their deities do not as a rule revere them. How much veneration has the idolater who calls his uncompliant God by hard names, beats him, hauls him down from his pedestal, and drags him through the streets, as punishment for not gratifying the supplicant's desires, and then, on a change of fortune, goes to him, picks him up from the dunghill, washes him, gives him a fresh coat of paint, restores him to his pedestal, makes apology for his rudeness, but hopes he will be quicker with his favors in the future? To the uninstructed and unspiritual, the symbol, instead of revealing the Divinity, obstructs him. We are touched by the sight of the devotees kneeling absorbed in devotion, on the floor of some ancient church. But their faces are wholly devoid

of expression. It is only in semblance that they worship. They will suspend their prayer in a moment to ask alms; they are mendicants in the guise of devotees. In countries where sensuous religions prevail, the religious sentiments, awe, reverence, aspiration, humility, are very low; all sentiment is low. In the common people religious feeling scarcely exists at all. The painted god does not fulfill the office or communicate the presence of the living God.

Every fresh outbreak of religious faith has been attended by the destruction of images. It was so in Judea, as the prophetic writings tell; in Asia, in Arabia, when Mahomet began his reform; in Italy, in Germany, in England, when Puritanism arose. The advent of the living God into the mind, has ever swept images away, as the fresh wind clears the air of flies. It was by absolutely forbidding images representing Divine things under any form that Israel maintained its faith as it did in lands and ages given over to idolatry. The faith of Israel has been a more intellectual and spiritual faith in Europe than Christianity; and to-day it surpasses in these prime respects the average religion even of Protestant Christendom. The religion was from the beginning a training to the mind. By making incessant demands on thought, and conscience, by

limiting the sway of fancy and sentiment, by removing the sensible props, and compelling reason to use its own eyes, grasp with its own fingers and stand on its own feet, it roused a mental and moral activity that have been invaluable in the experience of the race. The education was a severe one; the back-slidings were numerous; the lapses into seduction, idolatries, were frequent and deplorable, the recovery from them was painful and slow; but the end reached was worth all the effort spent.

The supremacy of intelligence is of such vast moment, the training of intelligence is of such infinite difficulty, that as soon as possible we take away the child's picture books and substitute thoughts for fancies. Shall we think it wise to adopt a different method in religion? To the assertion that the religion of Rome is still the best religion for the childish mind, I feel like replying, it is precisely for the childish mind or the mind thought to be childish, the mind uneducated and immature, that it is not the best. Cultivated minds can appreciate symbols and use them safely; uncultivated minds cannot. The illusions that are harmless to the enlightened, to the unenlightened may be fatally bewildering and mischievous. The sign to them soon becomes a divinity, and a divinity that does not help. Not helping, it is neglected, then discarded,

and in place of a religion, the baffled, cheated man has the opposite thing superstition, which is coarse and degrading in proportion as the symbol has been revered. With people of intelligence, refinement, and sensibility, whose minds are occupied with solid thoughts, whose hands are busy with useful work, the religion of Rome may be harmless ; but for the crude and imaginative, who can only change its poetry into vulgar prose, it is no more nourishing than pearls are to swine.

II. The religion of Rome is commended as being a religion of beauty. Artists esteem highly this aspect of it. It has in truth stepped into a glorious inheritance of architecture, painting, music, scenic decoration, and display. The court of Rome is the most splendid court in Europe, said an artist to me, in a tone which implied that in his judgement the splendor was compensation for other qualities not so admirable. The daughter of a clergyman who had given the years of a long and devoted life to the preaching of a pure spiritual faith, gave as a reason for attending the Catholic Church on her father's decease, that the music was finer there than any where else. Truth, or what commended itself to her as truth, she found nowhere ; but here she found what she found nowhere else—beauty, which was good wherever it grew. The prayers were in Latin,

the sermons were short, the ceremony she paid no attention to; but the organ and choir enchanted her. But for the sake of listening to fine music is it worth while to support a faith whose doctrine one rejects, whose spirit one repudiates, whose influence over mankind is felt not to be ennobling? Beauty is attractive, but there is such a thing as paying for it more than it is worth. It were better to forego it altogether than to enjoy it at the expense of sincerity and truth.

The beauty that adorns the religion of Rome is but partially her own creation. The best architecture, sculpture, painting are products of that glorious pagan world of which she was the successor and the heir. Even her gorgeous ceremonies and displays of color were borrowed from ancient faiths she has stripped and repudiated. Our genuine admiration of these should then be transferred to the people whose genius created, whose taste shaped them. They should carry the mind away to a world older than Christendom, when thought was free and feeling fresh and creative power in full vigor. There was the beauty loving religion. And yet the beauty loving religion did not elevate or sanctify. Beauty alone will not make a religion. Who then, that has a religion or esteems the character of religion, will sacrifice it to beauty? Get your religion first, then make it lovely

as you can. But to take the loveliness without regard to the religion it decorates and conceals is certainly not the part of thoughtful people.

And when we think of the beauty, shall we forget how much there is that is not beautiful at all, but is inexpressibly hideous—how much of the architecture is marred by additions which the religion is responsible for; how many cathedrals otherwise glorious are disfigured by tawdry shrines, tinsel ornaments, altars covered with pewter toys? Shall we forget the revolting images, the horrible paintings on canvass or ceiling, the grotesque carvings, the dolorous chants which the religion has given authorship to? If all superstitions were beautiful we might feel more tenderly towards them. But very few are; none are to minds uneducated to beauty. All illusions are dangerous to people who cannot see that they are illusions; and the people who can see are able to do without them. Would that all religion were made more beautiful than it is, by art and music, by form and color. Would that our churches were handsomer than they are, with pictures and statues and carvings in stone and wood. But I would rather see them balder than the baldest of them are, than have them richer at the cost of that which is worth more than all grace and splendor—the Spirit of truth—Sanctifier and Comforter.

III. But, it is urged again, this religion is a religion for the Heart, while Protestantism is a religion of the Head. Perhaps if Protestantism better deserved to be called a religion of the head, there would be less demand for a religion of the heart. "I have at last found my mother!" said a noble lady whose eager soul tired of speculation and worn by disappointment, accepted at last the thought of rest as all soothing and sufficient. And this is a frequent feeling. The thought of rest is so sweet, that even those who do not need it think they do, and dream tenderly of the ancient church that takes its suffering lonely children in its arms, folds them in its bosom, hushes their cries, stills their fears, allays their apprehensions, and permits sorrow and remorse to sleep. Sentimental people say: "we want a warm, loving religion; not a religion that calls on us to think, but a religion that is satisfied if we feel; that in short is content to make us feel, while it does our thinking for us."

Do the people who deeply feel, make this complaint of rational faith? Has it ever been found that that discourages feeling, or would accept speculation in place of it? A religion of heart, by all means: all religion is religion of heart: without heart there is no religion. But what is meant by heart? I always suspect when people talk of re-

ligion for the heart, that they mean a religion that relieves the heart of the necessity of feeling at all, in any wholesome manner. I am haunted by a suspicion that they want to surrender their heart, as a troublesome thing they cannot manage—and would fain have cossetted and patted and sung to sleep. The cry is for a mother with smiles and caresses, sweet meats and soothing syrup, who will not permit her darling to be grieved by the loss of its pretty playthings. They repeat the delicious text, “Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father,” but forget that the sparrow does fall, nevertheless, with broken wing, a prey to stronger plunderers of the air. A religion of the heart that encourages the heart in childish weaknesses, is rather a religion that starves the heart than a religion that feeds it.

A religion of heart should be a religion that draws the heart, gives scope for its affections, supplies objects for its love and fear, stimulates and expands its hope; a religion that puts the heart in sweet and trusting relation with providence, teaches it to say “Thy will be done, not mine; here I am; take me; use me; do with me what Thou wilt: the eternal law be law for me; the Divine love be all in all.”

A warm human religion will be a religion of the

heart; a religion that recognizes the force of the saying: "He that loveth not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen." Romanism has been such a faith in its way. Her ministrations to human misery are too many to speak of, and too famous to praise. They are the loveliest features in her life. But the spirit of her Charity is weakening: for it is a spirit of pity and compassion, that regards human beings as children to be comforted, not as men and women to be stimulated and reared. A true religion of the heart has faith in the heart, and would open within it the fountains of living water, that it need come to no well to draw; it will send the heart out in helpfulness, not compassion, to fellow creatures, to remove disabilities, clear away obstacles, extend opportunities, communicate benefits and privileges, obliterate lines of division, pardon the offending, reclaim the wandering, lift up the fallen. In this respect Protestantism has been more truly a religion of the heart than Romanism, and Rationalism has deserved the name more than either; for true Rationalism, when regarded in its central idea, awakens the deepest truth in the Divine Providence, and the most radical kindness towards men. It is a religion of the heart, because it calls on the heart to be worthy of itself, to perform the offices of a heart. For the unde-

veloped heart of the little child, so much, but so vaguely and unintelligently eulogized, it would substitute the live heart of the man or the woman, who has, in a measure, outgrown the sense of dependence, and come to know the delight of having others depend on it.

The religion of Rome is often called the religion of childhood—and in a tone of commendation that seems to imply a cordial justification of it on this ground. But supposing the multitude of mankind to be in the condition of childhood—are we warranted in thinking they must always remain there? Are we warranted in actively keeping them there, or passively allowing them to continue? Are we warranted in praising the influences that prevent their becoming adults? Who was it that said, “When I was a child I spake as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things?” To pass from emotion to sentiment, from sentiment to feeling, from feeling to intelligent conviction, from intelligent conviction to reasonable conduct, is an advance not a retreat.

The religion of Rome has pampered the heart with consolations, has even forestalled its desires, forcing its blandishments on men and women before they craved them. Saints and angels, madonnas and redeemers, priests and sacraments, so encompass the

believer that there is no breathing space for natural feeling. His feelings are artificial; his needs are manufactured; his tastes are acquired. Cast off the leadings and let him grow.

IV. To others the religion of Rome commends itself as being a religion of authority. There is here no doubt, says its disciples, no endless questioning, no tantalizing, torturing speculation, no everlasting beating to and fro among problems that can never be solved, no suspension between heaven and earth. Here all possible questions are answered; all attainable knowledge is given on an assurance that sets at rest all cavil. "I am a Catholic, said an able man, because as a Catholic I am not obliged to vex myself with the vain search after truth. I want to be let alone, and to feel that I am not responsible for my opinions on divine things. The Protestant Churches are honey-combed with disbelief; the Liberal Churches hold by a few shreds of faith, and are fast losing them; the Rationalists have refined away the religious ideas till their substance is gone; philosophy is a series of random systems, each of which has its say and disappears. Science threatens to demolish all belief whatever, and become an advocate of materialism. To the human mind truth seems undiscoverable. The Church of Rome relieves its children from the duty

of trying to discover it, and so at once guards me from error and the intellectual world from change."

But if one desires to stop thinking, why not stop thinking where he is? Why not accept without misgiving the faith of childhood? Why not take as final the creed of Methodism, Presbyterianism, Universalism, saying: This I hold to be infallible: I will go no further. *All the authority that any Church has is the authority its members concede to it.* The claim to authority is nothing if the claim be not allowed. That is infallible to you that you clothe with infallibility. We can rest where we are if we will. We are not compelled to read philosophy, or study science, or make ourselves acquainted with the quarrels of sects. It is possible to remain quite unfamiliar with the speculations of restless minds. One need not become a Roman Catholic in order to be vacant-minded. Unfortunately it is only too easy to be vacant-minded anywhere.

But when shall we outgrow the notion that certainty in regard to religious truths is indispensable, or even desirable? We demand it of no other truths. If certainty is needed anywhere, we should expect it or seek it in matters that concern us now—not that may concern us hereafter. We would know definitely and uner-

ringly, how our children may be saved from untimely death, how our lives may be made safe against pestilence, how our persons may be protected from violence, our property from thieves, our moral condition from vice, crime and sin. But we ask no infallibility here. We are content to remain in doubt of a thousand things of the most vital practical concern to us. The proper treatment of our bodies; the best arrangements of our social existence; the best methods of dealing with poverty and crime. We allow our civil and political, and even our sanitary arrangements, in which happiness and life itself—the happiness and the life of our families—nay, of our children and grandchildren are involved, to be left in the hands of tyros and dunces, not caring to inquire often, though the knowledge may be obtained for the asking: and yet it is thought necessary to have conclusive and infallible knowledge respecting the nature of the Creator, His designs in governing the universe, His plans in guiding it, the future destiny of all human beings! Men are satisfied with any fool's advice in regard to matters of tremendous moment to every portion of their earthly existence, character included, and nothing less than God's own word will content them when the question is of their condition when they shall be dead! We resent all dictation in government; we demand

absolute authority in faith! We are republicans in asserting our right to control earthly affairs as we find convenient; we are monarchists in requiring that our souls shall be submitted to an absolute king!

But it is precisely in the department of religious belief that authority should be rejected. Why should it be thought necessary for all people to concern themselves with subjects so much beyond their comprehension? Or why, if it is necessary, should they not be free to concern themselves, each in his own way? Seeing that the themes are so vague and so vast, that they present themselves in such different aspects, that they admit of so many differing modes of treatment, that they engage so many different qualities of mind, why should any one view or class of views be dogmatically taught? Here, if anywhere, speculation should be absolutely free, and minds of all structures, methods of investigation in every variety, should be invited to make their contribution to the general result of knowledge. The scientific method, the method of history, the method of prophecy, are all in place. When all methods have performed their utmost the result will be only conjecture. But when none of them have had a chance, but all have been put under subjection to an arbitrary decree, not even conjecture can be reached.

Besides, the education of the mind goes for something: and this the profession of absolute knowledge renders impossible. If all the high questions are answered before they are asked, and answered by a tribunal which admits no criticism and listens to no appeal, the intellect, being pronounced a vagrant and warned off the field, will become idle and vagabond, will lie about under fences, or stand among loungers, and lose its quality of energy altogether. A complete apathy ending in inability will befall the mind. There will be no active effort to understand what is communicated, no positive grasp of any truth. The intellectual power will be stricken with paralysis, and the whole rational being will be outcast. Among the masses of people in countries where the religion of Rome has prevailed this has occurred. How different from Protestant lands! Where, through the small aperture allowed by tradition and the Bible, the mind of man, pushed on to the wide realms of thought and revelled in the treatment of the greatest themes, and became strong by grappling with problems that called out the extremest endeavor of every faculty. Under Protestantism, speculation on Divine things has trained the intellectual powers of ordinary men and women, for their exercise on matters of daily concern. The freedom of thought that resolved dogmas into opinions, and

opinions into conjectures, and destroyed some of the cardinal beliefs of the Church, more than made amends by the breadth of tone and firmness of fibre it gave the mind from which all beliefs spring.

If authority have any realm of its own, it must be the realm of conduct; for conduct, being based on experience, may be brought down to line and measure. Even here it must be watched with misgivings at every step. But in the realm of thought, and of transcendental thought especially, it is wholly out of place. There the only final authority is reason.

V. One point remains to be considered, when we are considering the claims of the religion of Rome on our regard. That religion is commended as furnishing the only stable compactly built bulwark against the wave of secularism, or, in other words, of worldliness, or materialism, as it is called, that is sweeping with devastating flood over modern society. The concern for this world, and for the interests of this world, is, we are told, becoming exorbitant. The absorption in business, the passion for wealth, the lust for place distinction and power, the ambition for display, are increasing everywhere in extent and degree; the senses are claiming more than their share of honor, and there is apparently nothing to counteract the influence. The religion of Protestantism is split up

into numerous parties, each of which is too much occupied with its own sectarian affairs to work for the spiritual education of society. Singly they are powerless; and united they are not, and cannot be. The only thing of bulk that presents a compact mass of moral power to the incoming flood of worldliness is this ancient church; of recognized position among the great historic powers of the modern world; of high repute among dominions and principalities; rich with the tributes of believers in all lands, opulent in learning of all tongues, perfectly equipped and organized for its peculiar work, with all the arts engaged in its service, with institutions of every kind ready made and admirably administered, master of reverence and awe, setting forth under every form, in teaching, symbol, rite, sacrament, perpetual ceremony and association, the realities of the eternal world. Unassailable, because so immense: strengthened by the conflicts of centuries against the attacks of foes without, and kept by its own impressive unity from danger of insurrection from within, this mighty church, simply by maintaining its position, demonstrates the existence and the living presence of powers invisible and eternal: is herself a symbol of the eternity she points to behind her.

It is an impressive and touching imagination. I will not question the truth of it, by asking whether

the church has performed this service in the past, or is performing it to-day. Another question arises, this: Whether precisely that is the service that modern times and men demand. Is it especially desirable now that, outside of and apart from the world of affairs and secular interests, there should exist such an enormous institution, holding such boundless dominion, wielding such tremendous influence, gathering up in itself, and monopolizing, as it were, the elements and forces of the spiritual world? May it not be fairly asked if secular things and spiritual have not been separated too widely and too long; if the separation has not been injurious to both, and is not likely to be more mischievous still as society grows older; if the time has not arrived when efforts should be directed to the task of releasing spiritual power from the keeping of a great institution, and incorporating it in the constitution of society as it is; if the processes of secularizing religion and of spiritualizing life should not go forward together, until the waters of both seas reach a level. The divorce between the church and the world has lasted long, and the change we should welcome and congratulate ourselves on, is that which substitutes natural laws and sanctions natural bonds and affiliations, for the artificial methods that have been made to do service in the

olden times. Not to bring to bear upon life from the outside a power to remold and regenerate—but to reveal a power within life itself, to build up and renew; to disclose the vital laws of life, personal and social, and make evident its power to determine its own condition and attain its own ends, in a word to divulge the essential value of earthly affairs and conditions so that men and women will see as they go along, by whom their paths were laid out and whither they tend. To transfer sanctity from the church to “the world,” to recognize the sacredness of all worthy performance, whether it be ministering or teaching, or ruling, building, painting, editing, writing, buying, selling, investing, collecting, presiding over a household or working at a trade, and to weave principle into the texture of practice, such is the work before this and the coming generations. The spectacle of people living intelligently and therefore worthily, finding divine principles in their path and angels of terror and of truth by their side, is more admirable than the spectacle of crowds flocking to a cathedral to hear lessons from a priest, or meekly receiving impressions of awe from official hands. That a long time must elapse before such a spectacle will be seen, that the approach of such a time must be not only slow but painfully difficult is no reason for our not desiring it, is the best of

reasons why we should encourage and work for its coming. In this aspect alone the increasing spread of the catholic religion, the increasing spread of any instituted religion is a thing to be rather deplored than welcomed ; and the more attractive the form of the religion is, the more is it to be deplored, for all such increase but postpones the time when life itself shall become religious by conforming to the laws of its own structure.

Thus I have tried to indicate the objectionable features in that ancient religion which has lately been claiming so much of our attention. The points have been barely touched on ; each of them might be expanded by argument and illustration to the dimensions of a treatise. I have wished to bring them together in a group, that a single glance might reveal our whole position. Take the religion at its best, and practically no religion stands at its best,—take the religion at its best, and it is out of place in modern society. Its boasted advantages are really against it ; its symbolism is misleading ; its beauty is illusory ; its sentiment is artificial ; its authority is oppressive ; its pretensions to spiritual wealth are earned at the expense of humanity. We shall not clearly perceive all this till we come to ourselves, and by experiment learn how much a working conscience is better than a confessional, how much

active kindness is better than participation at the mass, how much a daily education in charity is better than the representation of a dying Christ and an atonement by foreign blood.

The attitude of the liberal towards the old world religions should be understood. It is an attitude of respect and appreciation, very different from the suspicion and antipathy of the last generation. We have learned to do every possible justice to all forms of faith; to study them from the inside through the minds of their devotees, to take them at their best, to give them fullest credit for the good they do or have done. But we have learned too that each is good in its own time and place alone, that the best religion for Southern Europe may be the worst for Northerners, that a perfect faith for the middle age may be a most defective faith for to-day.

We have learned to dread what once was worthy to be loved. We have come to believe that the mind is more than all the beliefs it has generated, that the heart is more than all the altars it has consecrated, that conscience is more than all the royalties it has enthroned, that the soul can build more stately temples than any it has reared even in the stateliest past.



THE GREAT HOPE.

IT was by no accident or arrangement that the festival of Easter was appointed at the season of the vernal equinox. It is the successor of an ancient pagan festival that commemorated the resurrection of nature from the grave of winter; a festival of joy in the dawning of a new hope for man. Spring is the season of Hope. The promise comes with summer; the fulfilment in autumn. The spring bestows nothing, pledges nothing; it merely awakens longing and anticipation. The early summer may arrive, slowly, with rain and cold; the late summer may bring the drought that scorches, or the flood that drowns and rots. The farmer may have to contend against blight, mildew, the worm, the tempest, untimely frost; the peach crop, the grape crop, the wheat crop may fail. Not until the year closes, is it ever known what the year was destined to produce. The prophecies of feeling and of science are alike vain. Yet in the face of all these uncertainties the hopefulness of the spring is fresh and buoyant.

We welcome the brightening skies, the softening air, the bursting trees, the loosening ground, as if each time the year was renewed they guaranteed joy and increase. The spring never fails to bring Hope.

The Easter festival is the festival of Hope. The resurrection it celebrates is a resurrection anticipated, not achieved. Foregleams of it are all that the early believers were privileged to entertain. Even Paul, the great preacher of the resurrection, seems to have cherished a hope of it rather than what we should dare to call an assurance. Though he speaks so confidently of the risen Christ, dwells so particularly on the fact of His having appeared to His disciples, dwells so minutely on the vision of Him at his own conversion, alleges such repeated communications from Him, and, on the strength of His resurrection, proclaims so earnestly the doctrine of the resurrection to life of believers in Him, still he uses the word "hope," in connection with the idea oftener than the word "knowledge." "Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience HOPE." "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth why doth he continue to hope for?" "That ye through patience might have hope." "That ye may abound in hope." "That ye may be partakers of his hope." "Seeing we have such hope we use great plainness of speech."

“We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness through faith.” “The patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Our Lord Jesus Christ and God, our Father who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope.” Other Apostles speak in a similar strain. Peter says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us unto a lively *hope* by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

The early believers, however certain of the Christ's resurrection, could not feel quite certain of their own. That depended on the closeness of their interior sympathy with their Lord, the sincerity of their belief, the wholeness of their consecration; and of these they could never be quite confident. Their minds were often disturbed by misgivings which the teachers tried, and not always successfully, to remove. Shadows of uncertainty occasionally clouded the hearts of the teachers themselves. The Lord “delayed His coming,” and that fact struck a chill to sanguine souls.

And the particular hope of the early believers proved to be nothing more than a hope. The Lord did not come. The disciples fell asleep, and have had unbroken slumber since. The trumpet did not sound; the dead were not raised in glory; the living

were not changed. From that day to this no instance has been recorded of the visible translation of Saint or Prophet from earth to heaven; no grave has been emptied at the call of angels; no believer has passed to another sphere by any portal but the portal of death. It is touching to think of a disappointment so cruel. The trust had been so implicit, the reliance so constant, the devotion so profound. Was it all for nought, the toil, the agony, the martyrdom? Nay, these were splendid in themselves, and but for the hope they would not have existed. The hope, while it lasted, and it lasted till the end, invigorated, consoled, gladdened, saved.

By the successors of the apostles the hope was entertained substantially as it had been, but was deferred to a later period. Since the first century, Christian believers, Catholic and Protestant, have persisted in the faith that their Lord had risen, that He would appear in glory, that they should rise in the body to meet Him, and should share His blessedness. But they anticipated no such events on the earth. Not till the earth had passed away, and the terrestrial order had come to an end, and the heavens had shrivelled like a scroll, would the trumpet sound and the dead be summoned from the ends of the world. Of so much they were confident, but whether the immortal life was to be theirs was

continually in doubt. To the last moment of life there was anxiety on this point, and at the last moment the anxiety often deepened into anguish. Dared the individual believer entertain the hope? Was his faith of the true quality? Had he shared the experience? Was he wholly Christ's? Did his heart pronounce him acceptable? The religious books, of Protestants especially, reveal a painful absence of assurance on these momentous points.

For it must be remembered that the Christian hope has from the beginning been limited to Christian believers. The religion did not affirm the immortality of the soul. The festival of Easter does not celebrate the doctrine of the natural immortality of man. It celebrates the resurrection of Christ and the promise of resurrection to all who belong to Christ. "As in Adam all die, even so *in Christ* shall all be made alive; but every one in his own order; Christ the first fruits, afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming." "I am the resurrection and the life; He that *believeth in me* though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoso liveth *and believeth in me* shall never die." "*If ye believe not that I am He* ye shall die in your sins." "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to *as many as thou hast given him.*" "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood,

hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day." "Every one that seeth the Son *and believeth on Him* hath everlasting life ; and I will raise him up at the last day." Language cannot be plainer than this. And this is the language that is still quoted as asserting the doctrine of immortality. The doctrine it conveys is the personal resurrection of believers. Is it said that the promise of *blessedness* is for believers only ; that the resurrection is for all, believers and unbelievers, but that the believer only is promised the resurrection *to life* ? That all continue to live, after a melancholy fashion, in the shadowy under-world of ghosts, in the misery of exile from the Divine presence, or in the agonies of the damned ; that all are "raised" though all save believers are cast down again ; and therefore Christianity does admit the natural immortality of men ? True, but then the resurrection to life is the only resurrection promised or hoped for ; immortality means felicity in the hereafter, or it means nothing. Condemnation, destruction, torment, annihilation, are not states of joyous anticipation. A belief in immortality that is not happy would not be cherished. The modern belief in the immortality of the soul corresponds to the older belief in the resurrection to life.

The Christian faith implies that the resurrection

was a special gift conferred by the Divine grace on believers; not a human prerogative, not a human achievement, but a boon made possible through communion with the source of eternal life; not a natural, but a supernatural condition, therefore, attained in the way of miracle. This was broadly stated by Henry Dodwell, once a professor at Oxford, who maintained from Scripture and the early Fathers that the soul is by nature mortal, but is made immortal by the will of God, for purposes of doom or recompense; that the capacity for immortality is communicated at baptism by virtue of the Divine Spirit there received. The doctrine was received with a shock of surprise, even by people who had always entertained it, but had never fairly faced its consequences. By dissenters it was fiercely assailed. At about the same time, Dr. Samuel Clarke, in lectures delivered at Oxford, attempted a demonstration of the natural immortality.

Abandoning Scripture and tradition he argued the question metaphysically, and offered what he called "a rigorous philosophical demonstration of the immateriality and consequently the immortality of the soul." This was early in the last century. The book of Clarke made a great sensation and became the main pillar of the new doctrine of the soul's

natural immortality, a doctrine in fact not new at all, but as old as Plato, and not "Christian" at all, but Gentile, the fruit of unaided reason.

By this new doctrine the hope of immortality was extended to the whole human race. But it was still no more than a hope, and as a hope was made thin and shadowy. In proportion as it was diffused it was rendered insubstantial. All men have souls; all souls are immaterial; whatever is immaterial is immortal; therefore all men are immortal. The argument is not massive. The immortality that is suggested by immateriality is not suggestive of richness or fulness. It looks like a dusty and pulverized condition, a continuance of infinitesimal particles, the perpetuation of motes in the air, of sand in a desert, varied perhaps by sirocco. Does immateriality impart intellectual and moral qualities that contain in themselves a pledge or promise of future felicity? That question arises. "The soul is immaterial;" but how much is included in the term "soul?" Is affection included, so that the statement means that heart's love will survive the shock of death? Is conscience included, so that the statement means that integrity and honor will last through the grave? Is intellect included, so that the statement affirms the persistence of mind, with its native talent and acquired accomplishment, its hunger for knowledge,

its love of truth, its taste and perceptions? That the soul cannot be destroyed is not much. A grain of sand cannot be destroyed. Can the soul, by its natural force, live, enjoy, expand? Of this there can be no assurance on general principles. Great souls may have great hopes; but what kind of hopes can small souls entertain? What kind of hopes can they entertain who never knew or made known that they had souls, but stupidly take this for granted on the ground, that they are in form human beings? The records of opinion show that while Christians have held to their special hope of resurrection through Christ, unterrified by science, undaunted by philosophy, the believers in the soul's natural immortality have been conscious that their hope was becoming fainter and was gradually slipping away. The disbelief in immortality has become common in all the philosophical schools. It has ceased with multitudes to be so much as an opinion. The grounds of even a promising anticipation are removed. Materialism has got the better of immaterialism, and soul with body resolves itself into dust.

And now Spiritualism comes in, maintaining the natural immortality of the soul, and confronting the philosophical and scientific misgivings, with evidence addressed to the senses. Spiritualism claims that

the immortality of the soul is demonstrated by such palpable proof as even the man of science must respect. Immortality, it declares, is no longer a hope, spectral or living, but an assurance, which everybody may have who will. But how far does the assurance go? Does it go further than the bare fact that the dead live again, and not as shadows but as persons, with all the elements of their personality about them, with all of mind they had on earth, with memory, affection, will, sympathy, capacity of enjoyment and improvement,—in short, with their whole human nature? Does assurance go beyond that? Does Spiritualism give assurance that all will grow in wisdom and goodness; that all will find themselves better off, will come to their senses, will get rid of their imperfections, will be purged of their guilt, will arrive at happiness at last? Spiritualism teaches all this; but does it teach it as positive knowledge or only as reasonable hope? And if only as reasonable hope, then is not the very pith of the doctrine of immortality left still to sunny conjecture? To know that we are really to live again is not much. Some of us are more concerned to know how we are to live, in what condition, with what prospect? Mere conscious being is not attractive to everybody. Many tell us that they should not regret the loss of that. They hope, when they hope

at all, for something more, and something different, and of this Spiritualism gives them what it considers a reasonable hope based on general considerations which it calls a spiritualistic philosophy, which may be sound or may not be. Thus Spiritualism ends in hope, like all the rest: a hope wide, encouraging, and sweet to men, still a hope and nothing more.

Nothing more ! But is not this enough ? Is not hope as good as anything, as good as assurance ? Is it not on some accounts better ? Paul makes hope the last beautiful result when patience experience and tribulation have done their work. It is the highest peak of the mountain tipped with glory from the sunbeam. There are no more inspiring offices than those which hope performs for men. In many things it is vastly more helpful than certainty. It is better for most men that the future should be veiled in mist, that they should not know what a day may bring forth, that all should be dark beyond the instant. Certainty would paralyze existence. Who would provide for life that he knew could not be continued ? Who would plant or sow in full prospect of blight or worm, of drought or mildew ? Who would navigate in defiance of impending shipwreck ? Who would explore in view of certain death from wild beast or savage ? Who would strive if either failure or success were announced

with infallible precision? The element of uncertainty, when uncertainty is colored by hope, gives life to all enterprise. We endeavor to make certain, because we do not know. The great working power of the race is imagination, and what inspires the imagination like hope? Hope keeps the mind on the stretch and the heart busy at prophesying. To peer into the future, to get glimpses of it, is an exercise that never wearies, a task that sharpens every faculty, trains thought, quickens fancy, deepens trust, and matures judgment. When we fall from hope to assurance, we fall from poetry to prose. We lose the sense of mystery and the education of sentiment that it brings with it, and dropping to the level of calculation work out our sum of existence by help of an account book. To investigate is the noblest office of the reason, far nobler than that of faith. There are those who make the uncertainty of the future an excuse for not thinking of it at all, an excuse for withdrawing within the lines of practical life and letting to-morrow bring what it will. But they are exceptional minds. The majority of men will take thought for the morrow, and the more dimly veiled by doubtfulness it is, the more thought they take, and by taking thought they develop the powers of the mind. In one respect knowledge and ignorance have a similar effect on the will. Both

arrest its movement, the former by dogma, the latter by stupor. They that are certain they know everything are as unwilling to go further, as they that know not what it is to be certain of anything.

Hope is expansive and elastic ; it is many colored and many voiced. A cardinal objection to the stereotyped representations of immortality is their monotony. All are served alike ; and where all are served alike, many are served with what they do not want. No single anticipation meets every mood. There is nothing, however attractive, that any one of us would do all the time. The pleasantest gardens weary ; the sweetest bowers cloy ; the most exhilarating pursuits are oppressive ; the most tuneful harps are discordant ; the brightest crowns make the head ache. Every doctrine of immortality pinches somewhere. If it accords with the lower dispositions it is disagreeable to the higher. Orthodox Christianity would seat us on golden stools, and set us to making music without so much as allowing us to choose our instrument. Spiritualism has too high an appreciation of summer and flowers. Rationalism is so enamored of progress that it covers the expanse of the hereafter with ladders and parallel bars, and promises the children of eternity an unceasing round of gymnastics. Swedenborg's visions of Heaven would make some men pray for annihilation. Every posi-

tive form is open to this criticism that it substitutes an uncomely fact for a golden fancy, which like the clouds of a sunset sky presents to the gazer, town or castle, a string of camels, a herd of sheep, a river, a palace, each continually changing into something else. The mystery of the future is its charm. Its castles are castles in the air, which we can build and alter at pleasure. A doctrine will be challenged and must be defended; a belief must maintain itself by arguments which provoke assault; a theory will be tested by hard questions which from the nature of the case cannot be answered and will be confronted with dilemmas from which extrication is impossible. Hope is of all degrees, and the future it creates is of all dimensions. Even the hopeless, if there be any such, who ask for no future and wish there were none, are not or need not be vexed by being told that they must have something they do not want. I desire that no one, though he be the wisest and the saintliest, may fashion the hereafter for me. For no picture can exhibit all the hues of hope. Give a hope of immortality, and the anticipation of it will be welcome to thousands whom every description repels—whether it be of orthodox or unorthodox believers. The hope will be accepted where the dogma would be rejected, because the hope leaves full play to the imagination, while the dogma forecloses imagination entirely.

But, say some, the hope is as hard to get as the belief. Whence shall it come to the hopeless? Is it then as hard to obtain hope as to obtain belief? It seems to me that hope survives all belief, in hundreds of cases, and is unavoidable when belief may be unattainable. Unbelief is sometimes utter. But is hopelessness ever so? Is it probable that hope ever absolutely perishes in the human breast? What is signified by the phrase "hoping against hope" but this very deathlessness of hope, this quality that hope has of opening door after door, and leaping barrier after barrier, of making bricks without straw and even without clay, of dashing over chasms where there is nothing but a rainbow for a bridge? It is scarcely possible to think of an utterly hopeless being. The very suicide, in his desperation has a hope that death will put an end to his despair, either by introducing him to another realm of being where misery will not reach him, or by granting him the peace, the profound peace of the grave. And this peace of the grave—is it not after all, faintly conceived as a half conscious state, a condition of repose undisturbed except so far as disturbance may be necessary to reveal the depth of its tranquillity,—as in sleep we wish to wake now and then, just enough to be aware how sweet the sleep is? Sleep itself brings no enjoyment, for as far as consciousness is

concerned it is annihilation. The blessedness is in sinking to sleep, and being sure of sleep's refreshment. The dreams that may come in health do not "give us peace," but enhance the anticipation. So it may be doubted whether they who voluntarily sink into the sleep of death with the thought that from it there will be no waking, do not after all dimly hope for the luxury of knowing that they are annihilated, and can suffer from the burden of existence no longer. They would be alive sufficiently to enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that they are dead. There are many, I am aware, who say that they do not hope for continued existence after death; in whom neither love of life, nor love of friends, nor love of knowledge, nor love of happiness, nor love of their souls, rouses corresponding desire; but even these might, if the secret of their hearts could be known, be found wishing for something too wild for them to expect. Hope instead of being dead in them may have retreated to its fountain because it would not waste itself on the barren places that men called "paradise." That the hope of immortality is deeper and more universal than the belief in it, appears from the efforts men make to substitute some other satisfaction for the lost one of faith. They hope to leave some record after them when they have gone; to live in the memory of friends, to be associ-

ated with dear places and objects, to be thought of tenderly, indulgently, gratefully by people whose love has been precious. The hope of an immortality of some sort seems never to die; it revives rather, and increases as the faith in conscious continuance in another state of being declines.

In saying this, it is not implied that hope is an in-born principle, an implanted instinct which, with or without justification, prophesies good in some indefinite hereafter. That position is often taken, but rashly, unadvisedly, and in the mood of feeling rather than of thought. Hope must have some ground to stand on, a basis of cloud, if nothing more solid, a twig, if nothing more steadfast. And such ground there is, firm enough for a magnificent hope, if for nothing more.

I. In the first place there is the imperative demand for justice, a demand, passionate, wild, unreasonable, indefinite often, perhaps usually, still at bottom earnest, and to all appearance justified. So far as we can discern there is injustice in the present arrangements of the world. When every allowance has been made for mistake and misapprehension; when a keen revision has thrown out whole classes of evidence; when compensations of all kinds, rewards and retributions of every sort and degree have been reckoned; when the moral microscope has been

employed to read between the lines of history, and what seemed gigantic iniquities have been resolved into harmless and even beneficent incidents ; when even faith in the divine rule of the world has been called in to fill out the explanations with conjectured possibilities, there remain cases which cannot thus be disposed of. Just persons, men and women, have suffered, in every conceivable manner, in mind, body, estate, reputation, character, through no wilful or conscious fault of omission or commission, have suffered without the smallest visible compensation, their wrong and misery being an unaccountable thing to themselves and to others, a mystery before which we stand dumb. On the other hand, unjust people have committed wrongs, in fraud, cruelty, lust, rapine, tyranny, baseness, for which they have never been called to account in their life time, for which they have offered no atonement, made no apology, suffered no compunction, been touched with no remorse ; in the perpetration of which they have gratified themselves, in the fruits of which they have enjoyed themselves, on the memory of which they have felicitated themselves. Examples of this kind are supposed to be numerous ; granting that they are few, allowing that only two or three can be found that resist all attempts at an interpretation that is in accord

with the divine equity—still these require justification to the heart; and so long as these are not clearly set apart as exceptions to the general order of providence, the impression of a pervading injustice will last, and the mind will, in spite of remonstrance from cool reason, turn its gaze towards another state of being where the inequality may be explained or removed. It is possible, of course, that at some future time, when the knowledge of the constitution of the moral universe shall be more complete than it is, all cases of seeming iniquity will be explained in full consistency with absolute wisdom and goodness; but till that time arrives, so long as iniquity, after we have done our best, stands out blank and bold as iniquity, unredeemed or unsoftened, the feeling that there must be a balancing of accounts in a hereafter, will be invincible.

That the argument may be pushed too far is conceded; that it is usually pushed too far is allowed; that it cannot fairly be made to sustain a structure of belief in another stage of being, I for one, frankly admit. But it is strong enough to support a hope. The thoughtful man may not be prepared to say that “either man is immortal or God is not just;” but the good man may breathe a hope that he may be immortal in order that he may see that God *is* just. Whether man be mortal or immortal, the justice of

God is not to be called in question. The hope is that we may be permitted to behold it.

2. Hope finds another justification in the incompleteness of life. Of all who are born the number is comparatively small who have opportunity to know or prove what they are or might become. In our cemeteries how many broken columns in memory of people whose lives have been cut short on the threshold of promise! As we consult observation and recall memories, we are astonished at the number of blighted existences and baffled careers. Years of toil and privation and the possession of the promised land denied, though the eye be not dimmed or the natural force abated; the organization of the brain giving out, at the very moment the eager intellect would make a crowning effort; the dawning ambition clouded if not lost in darkness before noon; the budding promise of usefulness nipped by an untimely frost on the edge of summer; suns dropping from the firmament they seemed about to fill with light! These sights meet us unceasingly, and whenever we see them, the dream of some future fulfilment comes unbidden to the heart.

The dream is very vivid indeed when those who are thus prematurely blotted out are noble persons, who, living for great ends, have died without seeing them fulfilled, or, emulous of high attainment in goodness,

have been prevented by death from achieving the character they made the object of their endeavor—life for them ending, and all that rendered life dear denied.—*The arrested development of soul* is one of the perplexing phenomena of experience. Perhaps we have no right to expect anything else. Perhaps the demand is extravagant that the individual should be permitted to perfect himself in mind or in character; it looks like an expectation that the individual members of the race shall attain a stature which the whole race, in the course of ages, alone can reach. Still the hope that wisdom and goodness may be justified in their children, that summer and autumn will, in due succession, crown every human spring-time is so natural as to be with most people inevitable. And that hope can come to fruition only in a hereafter. The summer means heaven; the autumn means eternity.

3. Then there is the heart's hope that its affections will be allowed to unfold themselves in full strength and beauty, and reach the complete satisfaction they long after. Love of parent, child, brother, or sister, friend, become an organic part of the nature, feels defrauded when the object is taken away, cries out for reunion and will not be comforted with anything less than a hereafter of loving opportunity. Yet more earnest and tremulous with

passion, is the cry for satisfaction from those whose affection has never found its object, or having found it, is unable to bring it within reach, but is met on every hand by impediments that cannot be removed. Experiences of this kind are common, more common than is generally believed, and they are often heart-rending. Reason lends to such cries an open ear. In calm moments we refuse to admit the plea that love, any love, has by virtue of its strength a claim on full fruition of joy. They who do not feel the pangs of heart-hunger, regard as mere sentimentalism the notion that lovers must find lovers again and friends friends; that a heaven must be provided in the future for those who have missed heaven here, through their own fault perhaps; that eternal mansions must be prepared for homeless hearts, where the separated shall be gathered together again and the lost shall be found. But when the heart-hunger comes, as it does to almost every body sooner or later, the sober judgment of the intellect is repudiated, hope reigns supreme, and urges its title to be considered one of the hopes that must not be "put to shame." No doubt the hope, in the great multitude of cases, is passionate and visionary; the affection will cool in a short time; the desire will slacken; the hunger will subside without gratification; temporary consolations will meet the occasion

of sorrow, and the hope will fold its wings far on the hither side of immortality. But it is not always so by any means. The longing is often life long, and gains in depth as it loses in passionateness. Many will never believe that

'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all,

and will deem themselves wholly justified in feeling that the awakening of love guaranties a full satisfaction of all love's desires. And with these the hope of an immortality is inappeasible. With them hope is an inspired prophet, a divine oracle in the heart, whose voice it is blasphemy to neglect.

Considerations like these may not have much force as arguments; but as persuasions they are not without power. Practically, they have immense, though imponderable value. If they do not sustain conviction, they enrich and gladden sentiment, and sentiment, with the multitude of mankind, carries a mightier and wider sway than conviction. It is in feeling that we live. The daily sunshine and atmosphere of the heart are a joy and habitual inspiration. The beliefs we define and profess may be the best account we can give of our general condition of mind; but the poise of feeling decides our place in the world of imagination and faith. Beliefs may be feet to us, but feet do not carry us far. Faith and hope are

wings, by the aid of which we scale the barriers of space, and flit across the barren reaches of time.

/ The materials that hope is made of are more precious than those of which belief is composed. Belief is built up of arguments, reports, traditions, imperfect observations of hastily collected phenomena, but hope is the result of loving, trusting, serving, obeying, being. These qualities of the person are the most trustworthy prophets of the person's destiny. Make them rich and they will not disappoint their possessor. Happiness will follow goodness; or if not happiness, that which is far better, the trust that surrenders happiness and accepts the order of the divine decree.

CLOGS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

Dec 2nd / 1875,

I announce my subject this morning as Clogs and Opportunities.

Let me endeavor in a few words to make clear the line of my thought, and the drift of my argument. The two words suggest opposite ideas; the one, a shut door, the other an open door; the one a fetter, the other a sail; the one a hindrance, the other a help; the one limitation, the other deliverance. Opportunity is supposed to be deliverance from clogs. Clogs are supposed to be obstacles in the way of opportunity. The lament is incessant that clogs are so numerous and so heavy, that opportunities are so few, and so easily exhausted. There is a perpetual moaning and murmuring over the burdensomeness of fetters. All the congratulation there is celebrates the abundance and facility of opportunities. It has been for these hundreds of years the habit of people,

and of the best people,—the most thoughtful and earnest people,—to speak of the world as a scene of sorrow, weariness and tribulation, of life as a long and arduous battle, of experience as a series of afflictions and humiliations. In fact, this may be called the “Christian” way of looking at the world, and the “Christian” way of speaking about the world. The reason of it is that the accepted theory of the world for a good deal more than two thousand years, is based on the notion that there is a bitter and deadly war,—a war to the death,—between Light and Darkness, between Good and Evil. Good being a beneficent principle, and Evil, a principle also, maleficent. The resulting feeling was, therefore, that this world is a place of exile, a dungeon, a desert; that man is shut up in it, a spiritual being, fully endowed with heavenly gifts and capabilities; that the effort of life is to emancipate himself from this thralldom; that experience is the friction, the rub, the tribulation incident to being in the dungeon at all, and that the only power that can emancipate is the power of an angel; that deliverance must be sent down to mankind from supernatural sources, in answer to prayer and supplication, as a reward of humiliation, and religious observance; every effort, in short, being made by which the finite mind can come out of itself and find refuge in the infinite

Being. From this theory all these accepted ideas regarding the world and life proceed, and upon this theory men are induced to speak as they do about clogs and opportunities.

Let us now sum up the opposite view, and consider the version which the new religion gives, of the world and life and experience. Say that the world is not a dungeon, that life is not a battle, that experience is not a series of tribulations and woes, that we need not go out of ourselves for help to put the world under our feet, that prayer, for the interposition of the Supreme Power to supplement the world that he himself has made and endowed, and in which is his continual presence, is unnecessary ; say that we gain strength as we go along, that it is in the effort to remove obstacles that we acquire power to remove them, that obstacles are in this sense furtherances, and see at once how the entire view of things changes. Now we perceive how clogs may be opportunities, perhaps the best opportunities, possibly all the opportunities that there are.

I do not content myself with saying, as men have been in the habit of assuming for two or three thousand years, that it is possible, with faith and saintliness and holy will, for people richly endowed with spiritual gifts to overcome obstacles, to put temptations under their feet ; I contend that as a simple

fact in the experience of mankind, clogs not only can be converted into opportunities, but are for all people opportunities. In saying this, I strike the key note of this morning's discussion.

My thought is simply this: that there is no such violent contrast between foes and friends, obstacles and furtherances, fetters and freedom, as is commonly supposed; that the whole world is a world of opportunities; that life is a combination of advantages; that experience is simply the result of availing ourselves of them.

Let me illustrate this simple thought. First, we will take the clog of the body. You know the old idea, the idea that is the keystone of Roman Catholic and of Protestant Evangelical Christianity, that the material body is the seat of evil. Hence our horror of matter. Hence our dread of worldliness. Hence our greatest loathing of whatever is animal. Hence in the religious world the warring against natural desire, the natural propensities, material wishes and hopes, as if these were essentially vile and bad, and as such to be repressed and extirpated.

This old doctrine, which is held by thousands of people, which is held, in fact, though quite unconsciously, by all evangelical Christians to-day, is, as a simple matter of fact, pretty much outgrown. There are, in any Christian country, comparatively

few people who practically admit the theory that their bodies are the seat of evil, that matter is inherently base. On the contrary, you will find people now, Christian people as well as others, so-called Christian people at all events, living on the supposition that it is a good thing to train the body, to multiply pleasant sensations, to gratify natural tastes, to expand natural powers, to augment strength, to increase natural desires and gifts. But though the theory is virtually discarded, and practically has become obsolete, though the philosophy rested on is not understood, is so completely forgotten in fact, that the very people that profess it cannot believe it when stated bluntly to them; still, there exists a sentimental feeling in regard to the body as a clog, which it is worth while to notice.

We hear people speaking thus: If it were not for these bodies of ours, we could hear the songs of the angels; but the thickness of the ear prevents our hearing any but the tones within certain scales, there being infinite tones below, and infinite tones above, which the organ does not report at all. We would like to see invisible forms, but the curtain of the eye is dropped before our vision. We should be glad to touch and embrace shapes that are finer than any mortal bodies, but we are able to grasp only substantial things. We are eager to speed across the

earth at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, and at most we can walk three or four.

The body, that is the clog, the fetter, the drawback on the soul. One of these days, people say, this encumbrance will be removed, for these earthly elements will be discarded. Suppose they were! Can we conceive of a disembodied spirit? Have we an idea what sort of a creature a disembodied spirit may be? A spirit, I mean, without organs, form, dimensions, properties. We cannot imagine such a thing! In trying to think of the infinite, the pure spirit, you think of him as having a human form. The ancients spoke of God as being the soul of the world. If God be the soul of the world, then the world is the body of God; and so they thought. The body a clog! The body is an organ, an opportunity, a bundle of opportunities, a system of opportunities. No living man ever yet knew, or guessed, or imagined the wealth of opportunity that nature shut up in that frame of his.

Only now and then some one person gives us a glimpse in some particular direction, of this corporeal capacity. The artist reveals the wealth of capability that is stored away in the human eye, as he discloses shades of color which mean nothing to us, brings out effects of light that never struck us, traces lines and proportions of which we have no

understanding whatever, actually detects secrets in natural things that are concealed from ordinary men and women.

The leader of orchestra, who, while a hundred instruments are playing in concert an overture by Wagner or symphony of Beethoven, can detect the error of a single note in one of the violins, reveals the capacity of the human ear.

The fingers of the accomplished pianist, that seem alive each one with a separate soul, so alive that, without being watched or apparently guided, streams of music drip like rain from their delicate tips, show something of the power that is latent in the human hand. This is what we see now and then.

Suppose that every human being suddenly, at a moment's warning, were fully endowed with these finished powers, the body actually being in every faculty what it occasionally is in a single sense; what could he do with the endowment? Nothing. Too much opportunity is as bad as none. He would be baffled, bewildered and crazed by excess of advantage.

It is seldom that we meet healthy people who appreciate their health. People whose bodies are in the very best condition for effort, rarely use them for the noblest effort. The history of beautiful

women is a miserable history of vanity and frailty, of reckless and ruinous passion. There are, indeed, delightful exceptions, but exceptions they unhappily are. History exhibits, now and then, the conspicuous and glorious example of a woman endowed with beauty and grace, gifted with fascination of manners and voice, using her exquisite opportunity by sweetly pleasing her fellow-creatures, making them happy, winning them to goodness, bringing them around her as the centre of an innocent and joyous society. But for the most part, the gift of beauty is a fatal gift, because it is too much for its possessor to control; it is more enginery than can be legitimately employed. The history of strong men, too, in large measure, is a history of bruisers, prize-fighters, and bullies. It is not invariably so. Now and then there is a conspicuous instance of a man of magnificent physique, who uses it harmlessly for the welfare of his fellow-creatures, under a serious sense of accountability to the giver of his frame; but this is very rare indeed. For the most part, health is oppressive to people, and overcomes them, as joy does when in excess. The system must be crushed back, as it were, on itself; windows must be closed, doors must be barred, in order that a portion may be improved.

It is said that it is not the body, but the sick, the diseased body, that is the clog. We should not com-

plain of our bodies, the invalids cry, if they were healthy. We complain because they are disordered. But again, I say health as a rule does not minister to virtue. The dissipated, the abandoned, the licentious, the inebriate, are all drawn from the class of the healthy people. It is the overplus, the exuberance of health, that is dangerous, being too much for men to manage; consequently, it ruins where it should rescue. The truth seems to be that a certain amount of infirmity is necessary to make people appreciate use and enjoy the power they actually possess. It is an ancient commonplace, that the passive virtues of every quality, patience, resignation, humility, sweetness, care for others' welfare, sympathy, the graces of saintliness are educated to a large degree by sickness. The advantages of sickness have been the theme of a great many pious sermons. We have all heard the ministry of the sick-room extolled; nay, it is the confession of people who have been sick themselves, that they are introduced through that avenue into compassion with the suffering and sorrow of their fellow-creatures. All sickness does not purchase that effect, of course. Sickness often makes people nervous, querulous, and generally distempered; but a large portion of so much passive virtue as there is in the world, is due plainly to limitation of this kind, due, that is, to the

obstacle, the stern confinement which sickness imposes. Is it not true that a great deal of the active force of women, their sensitiveness, their power of patience and compassion, has been due as a fact, to the infirmity of their bodies, to the weakness they complain of, the obstacles and repressions they resent?

A generation since, we were all talking about Laura Bridgeman, a poor girl in Massachusetts, who was born deaf, dumb, and blind. These avenues being barricaded, whatever strength there was in her, rushed out of the only avenues that were left, her fingers, her skin. It was wonderful indeed to see what this poor limited girl did from the pitiful necessity of the case. With these so often useless appendages of the human body, she could detect the material of which garments were made; she could even feel colors. The sensibility of her skin enabled her to perceive moral atmospheres and to penetrate the secrets of character through the moral influences they shed abroad upon the air. Laura Bridgeman was not a remarkable person; had she been endowed as we are with a full complement of senses, we never should have heard of her; the fact that she was limited and circumscribed extorted from her the display of these wonderful gifts, and made her the attractive study she was to the scientific men of a generation.

Not long since there died in England an artist of remarkable talent. He had been a poor boy, badly brought up, with scarcely a trace of nurture, a lazy, idle, vagabond youth. One day as he was trying to steal apples the bough of the tree broke and the lad fell to the ground, receiving an injury to his spine which effectually prevented performances of that sort ever after. Shut up in his room, confined to his bed, no longer in danger of the jail, the state's prison, or the halter, "cabinéd, cribbéd, confined," whatever vitality there was in the youth came out in his eye and touch. There he lay and thought, reviving impressiöns, recalling facts of observation. In his plundering and marauding expeditions, he had studied the character and habits of dogs. With singular and marvelous skill he begins now to draw the familiar animals, and with a success that won his way to fame; he is a fortunate man who can become the possessor of one of this young man's drawings. Infirmary transformed the vagabond into an artist. The elog, the fetter, the limitation, perhaps saved him from the gallows.

You have all heard of Blaise Pascal, one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived; a man of whom it has been said that his intellectual powers were such as were seldom if ever bestowed on a human creature. He was puny, sick, diseased, from his

youth. Able to do next to nothing, shut up in his study, delicate and tremulous, all the blood that was in him ran to brain; the feats that he performed,—he died before forty—have astonished the world, and astonish the world to-day.

It is a recorded biographical fact, that his greatest mathematical discovery,—and he made more than one,—was due to the spinal irritation that disease produced which prevented sleeping.

Take as another instance Robert Hall, a Baptist preacher of the last generation in England, the greatest preacher of his time,—a man of extraordinary eloquence, wonderful reach of thought and power of moral impression. He was an invalid confirmed, a helpless invalid, confined to his bed the greater part of the week in acute suffering. It has been surmised that the irritation produced by the suffering, the effort to overcome it, the rebellion against it, stimulated the magnificent eloquence that was a power and a glory in his day.

People say: If these men were so brilliant when thus disabled, what might they not have become, had they been blessed with full capacity? Perhaps nothing at all. We might never have heard of them. The possibility is that the great Pascal, vexed with many cares, never might have written his extraordinary books, but for the disease that drove him back

upon himself, and irritated to unnatural activity his nervous system.

What is the inference for all this? That sickness is better than health? Would it be well for us if we all had disease of the spine, were all confined to our chambers? Not at all. It is not the limitation in itself that is helpful, it is not the sickness that works the miracle; it is the effort to overcome it, it is the necessity which the barrier imposes of pushing through a narrow gorge into activity. Looking at it closely we see how sickness furnishes the condition under which we acquire knowledge of the laws of health. In studying sickness, we study the constitution of the human frame. In learning how to avoid sickness we learn how to maintain the frame in its normal condition. Not until we shall have exhausted sickness, not until we shall have learned at every point to meet and put it away, shall we enjoy perfect health. Health is an acquired, not a natural possession; an achievement, not a gift; in order that we may appreciate it we must earn it, thus winning little by little the right to faculties whose hardly conquered value will be too precious to waste.

Take another illustration, the clogs of circumstance,—poverty, obscurity, the narrow lot,—what complaint we hear about these limitations! If we could only abolish poverty, if we could but snatch

people out of the thraldoms which hedge them in, what splendid developments of social life we should behold! Should we? Is it then true, that those who do not feel the pressure of circumstance, who are neither poor, nor cramped, whose lot is not circumscribed, whose field is ample,—is it true that these are noble, generous, great? Nay; of these are the idle, the improvident, the wasters of life, the squanderers of opportunity; these are the people who have so much room that it stretches out into wilderness, so much time that the hours run into one another, the days are blurred, the years spread into morasses, and life has no determination; they have no time for any useful things. The cry comes from thousands of women, nurtured in luxurious homes, taught in the best schools, favored with everything that wealth and indulgence can bestow, their days unoccupied, their existence without a ripple—the bitter cry is heard, a cry of weariness and almost of despair, “Give us something to do! Find us work or we perish.” They are pining away because they are not under limits. Their field is too large for their cultivation. One of the problems of society,—one of the sore problems just now,—is to assign a limitation, to set up an obstacle, to appoint a task for precisely this class of people who at present have no limitation, no task, nothing to resist. The people

who complain that they have no time, are people whose time slips away because there is nothing to stop it. Do you want a thing done? go to the busiest man; never to the idlers. He has no leisure, he never learned the art of detaining the moments. With him it is "water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink." The man is drowned in the flood of being, he is torn to pieces by his own dogs; he is rotted out by the amplitude of his circumstances. Clog is opportunity, hinderance is help, obstacle is furtherance.

It has been stated somewhere that for four generations in England, no man became eminent, as lawyer or physician, who had inherited an income of £200 a year. See what narrow and circumscribed conditions men must be placed in. Not a man in England whose desire raved against those narrow boundaries! So many cattle browse contentedly in these little pastures. No impulse to overleap the walls of so close a sheep-fold! So cramped a space sufficient for their longest excursions! It speaks poorly for the development of human nature, but there stands the fact, that until one comes against a boundary, until one feels the pressure of a wall, he is unconscious of the awakening of power in himself.

The soldiers of Hannibal, the Carthaginian gen-

eral, one of the greatest soldiers of history, had crossed the Alps in mid-winter, had defeated the Romans in battle after battle, had shown themselves all but invincible, through their perfect valor and discipline. They came to Capua, the most luxurious city of Italy, and a single winter in that delicious climate broke up their discipline and undermined their strength. They were ruined by ease. Yet they were the same men they had been; they had the same sinews; they had the memory of their past battles; the lessons of their previous training were fresh; but the stimulus of necessity was wanting. Had a foe sprung upon them they would have rushed to their arms and proved themselves once more invincible. No foe appeared, and the silken sinews offered no combat to iron men.

The opportunity of Moses was the abject condition of his people, their ignorance pride and superstition, the necessity of keeping them forty years under training in the wilderness before they were fit to enter the promised land. But for that stern necessity we might never have heard of Moses the law-giver.

The opportunity of David was the jealous persecution of Saul. Had he stepped easily into his throne, he would hardly have thrilled his nation with the songs that make him immortal.

The opportunity of Jesus was the exceedingly

narrow circle of the national ideas; the stubbornness of prejudice and dogmatism that ruled the men of his generation, drove him back upon himself and made his thoughts gush like fountains from the recesses of his heart. The bigotry of his people crystallized his qualities into saintliness. Their contraction was the occasion of his grandeur.

The opportunity of Cromwell was the desperate condition of England at the time when he lived, and the absurd stupidity of King Charles.

The opportunity of Washington, was Valley Forge; the divisions among the people, scantiness of war supplies, the unwillingness of the States to send men. That great will made itself great, manufactured its greatness in the terrific laboratory of his country's distress. Washington would never have achieved his renown, might never as a character have existed, but for that stern necessity; the man, the human being, never might have been, but for these terrible oppressions, these stubborn limitations, these grim opportunities that men call dangers, which harrassed him on all sides, thrust him back upon himself, shut him up as in a cell, and compelled him to push out his possibilities or die.

The opportunity of Abraham Lincoln, was the narrowness of his lot, his poverty and abjectness, the miserable character of his associations, the dearth

of society, and the necessity there was upon him, being shut up in this small pen-fold, to get himself, out. His next opportunity was the angry debate on the question of slavery ; and last, the rebellion of the slave power against the constitution. But for this Abraham Lincoln, never would have been developed, would never have lived as the man we know.

A generation ago, we were complaining of slavery. If we could only have this incubus off our breast what a leap our nation would make towards its glory ! To what heights of attainment we should at once spring !

We perceive now, that it was the incessant fret and friction of slavery, its relentless pressure, its stubborn determination that we should have no life of our own, its unscrupulous crowding, that compelled us to summon from the depths of our hearts all the manhood that was in us ; educating the sternness of our justice, maturing the vigor of our hope ; compelling us to study the very root-principles of our institutions.

What then ? Are evils good things ? Are organized wrongs beneficent ? Not in themselves. They serve us simply because they compel us to react against them, and only as they compel us to react against them ; but, as they so compel us, they are good. They are educators of power.

Could the reformer's dream as by a miracle of Providence, be realized to-day, the vision of the lover of peace, the hope of the patriot, the aspiration of the philanthropist; could poverty, guilt, crime, serfdom, war, be abolished at a stroke, should we find ourselves at the end of our attainment? Should we be as great as we should seem? Nay, we should relapse rather. We should simply be remanded back to Eden; and what sort of a condition for living men would that be? A condition of undeveloped possibilities. Eden was but a baby-house. Adam and Eve were children, and not very hopeful children, either; without experience, conscience, ambition, desire, sympathy, moral power, or moral aspiration,—children sporting in a garden, with nothing to do, not even fruits to tend or vines to train. Their sin, as it has been called, was the evidence of their virtue. Their rebellion was the reaction against their limits, which showed the possibilities of the man and woman; their sudden expulsion thrust them out into the privilege of their awful opportunities. That expulsion from Eden with the waving sword of the cherubim before the gates was an angelic call to them to be man and woman; and that, from thenceforth they began to be. Would you restore that paradise? Were the dream of the reformer to be fulfilled this moment, it would be restored.

The vision of heaven as it has been entertained by orthodox believers time out of mind, is a place much like Eden, where there is nothing to do, no more body, and no more business, no more tasks, no more limitations, no more being. The task of divines has been to find employment for the people thus released into vacancy; it was not easy; being unable to find useful occupation, they could think of nothing but to sit on thrones and sing.

The popular heaven is a heaven of pure opportunity without a clog or a fetter; no walls, no obstacles, but then, no humanity. By carrying the here into the hereafter we make the hereafter blessed.

Lastly, the clog of theology, the stumbling block of bigotry, the barricade of dogmatism; fixed ideas, fixed systems, bad beliefs, let us consider all this. What complaint there is of the disability which they impose on the human mind! What sorrow to endure them, what suffering to overcome them; what quenching of the spirit from their gloom! What fatal discouragement to timid thinkers and tender hearts! Yes, it is, indeed, true that bad theologies have done fearful mischief in the world, in the way of tormenting bodies, misleading minds and crucifying souls, bad beliefs respecting God and the Future, the soul; its destiny and its experience, have produced their share of personal and social misery;

there is no telling the woe and sorrow, and calamity, that they have caused.

But there is another side that is worth considering. False religions have had this use and value, that they have educated the human mind in faith and courage as sweeter beliefs never could have done,—hideous, barbarously cruel, as they have been ; the more cruel, the more hideous and barbarous, the sterner and more persistent has been the reaction of the human heart against them. They have thus been the compulsory salvation of mankind, an unwilling education in thought, and yet more in endurance and heroism, in hope and moral perceptions, in unselfish devotion to principle and respect for man's nobler part. That we have souls to call our own is due to the spiritual foes that would have enslaved our spirits. We owe a debt to the worst religions that have been on earth, that can never be discharged, never fitly spoken of.

The theology of New England, as it was, explains the moral growth of New England. Hard, acrid, angular, how many tender bosoms have been bruised against it, how many delicate consciences and sensitive souls have been wounded and struck to death by its sharp points ! And yet, what a discipline in thought it was ! For when men were hedged round as with a line of fire by these tremendous

dogmas of predestination, depravity, atonement, hell, it was imperative that they should resist and react ; reaction in favor of rational liberty of mind could not be prevented. Somebody thinks, questions, doubts, denies, a conflict is brought on between spirit and letter, the result of which is, that we now are able to meet here as we do from Sunday to Sunday, entertaining in peace our own sincere thoughts. A frequent subject of complaint is the disadvantage of having been trained under orthodox theories, the drawback it was to have been nurtured in these grim beliefs of the Puritans. In many cases it is undoubtedly a heavy incumbrance. In some cases it has been a lifelong impediment to clear and inspiring beliefs. The creed has been a strong sepulchre for the soul ; the barrier has pressed too close, and the man has been suffocated within the close cavern walls. But again, in other cases, the theology has been a means of intellectual training ; a cultivation of the religious sentiments, an education in meekness, patience and sincerity. The people who have gone through that training, and have come out of it, who have grappled with it and thought it out, who have inherited it and outgrown it, whose root of character is there while their branches spread out in the sunshine and air of the newer thought, are among the sweetest, truest, fairest people we know.

Our own Emerson, one of the loveliest of living men, noble in conscience, tender in heart, illuminated in reason, broad and delicate in spiritual vision, had behind him eight generations of devout orthodox clergymen. It was the conscientious effort of those pious, painful men, to find out the truth within the limits appointed to them, to grapple with the terrible questions which their age propounded, and to answer them as they could. People who are brought up outside of the old theology, who were born into Liberalism, without personal knowledge of the older faith—having no problems thrown down before them, and consequently being discharged from the duty of turning them over, are tempted never to ask, and failing to ask, become loose flaccid and indolent in their minds. We have to conjure up for them new questions, to bring forward new problems that will take the place of the grim old provocatives their fathers knew.

There is ground therefore for saying that the *e-log* is the opportunity. In setting forth such a doctrine we are indulging in no paradox. It is from no wish to entertain a curious intellectual speculation that the position is taken. It is a grave and serious matter, involving one of the principles of the new religion, and conveying a practical hint of the future it opens and the method it employs.

For this new religion, which represents the world as a system of opportunities, life as a process of development, experience as a series of growths, which teaches that difficulty creates energy, and energy impels advance, and advance contains the future in itself, would substitute for the complaint of life's misery, congratulation upon life's occasions. Instead of saying,—“Oh, for the wings of a dove that we may fly away and be at rest!” its devotees express a warm and hearty sense of gratitude that they are here, that theirs is the day, the freshly bestowed morning, friendship, love, duty, hopeful tasks, and happy achievements. The lesson of the new religion is that all is opportunity. To learn that lesson well is to learn the lesson of the perfect faith.

For life is good whose tidal flow
 The motions of God's will obeys;
 And death is good, that makes us know
 The life divine which all things sways.

And good it is to bear the cross,
 And so the perfect peace to win,
 And naught is ill, nor brings us loss,
 That brings the light of heaven in.





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